

ESSAYS IN
LIBERALISM
BY SIX
OXFORD MEN



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ESSAYS IN LIBERALISM

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BY
SIX OXFORD MEN

This is true Liberty, when freeborn men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free :
Which he who can and will deserves high praise :
Who neither can nor will may hold his peace.
What can be juster in a state than this ?

Milton, after Euripides

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JN

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TO

JOHN MORLEY

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PREFACE.

IN these days, when books multiply and men decay, it becomes more than ever the duty of editors to provide some apology for the appearance of a new volume. Since, however, the vogue of the historical school and of popular science makes explanation consist in a *résumé* of the origin rather than a defence of the end, our task is considerably lightened. The writers of these Essays were drawn together in the political debates and the contested elections of the Oxford Union Society. To that society, and to the stimulating discussions of the Palmerston and Russell Clubs, we owe a common debt of gratitude. Six years ago Undergraduate Oxford tended to be Tory or Socialist: since that time we have seen an extraordinarily strong Liberal movement absorb, with one or two remarkable exceptions, most of those who care for political discussions or debates.

So far as the causes are personal, Mr. Belloc has been the leading spirit; and we cannot refrain from gratefully expressing our admiration for his kindling

eloquence, his Liberal enthusiasm, and his practical idealism. Much that he has not written is indirectly derived from him, inspired by a companionship which we have all found a liberal education.

The general purpose of a book of youthful essays must be rather a confession of faith than a discussion of opinions; and the virtue expected will be rather freshness of conviction than ripeness of thought. The special aim of this book was the statement of a few definite principles applied to various departments of politics. Finality, exhaustiveness, the detailed knowledge of the expert: these are merits we have hardly attempted to realise. But if we have not succeeded in conveying that these two covers contain the work of six men who know their own minds, and have, not perhaps a formed opinion on every topic of public affairs, but at least some principle to determine the lines of an opinion, then we have failed of our object. It would be presumptuous to lay claim to the prime virtue of lucidity, but we may boldly affirm that these papers are precise and outspoken. Views definitely presented may be wrong and foolish; but views tentatively hinted under temporising reservations and concessions are, even if free from positive error, too unreal and unsubstantial to be called effectively right. We prefer to fail or to succeed in frank black

and white rather than to shilly-shally in colourless neutrality. Further, it was difficult to write of the moment and not to find that we had written for the moment. Details falsify themselves between the pen and the press; but principles cannot be declared in skeleton abstraction. We have endeavoured to give some warmth and colour of actuality without condemning the work to become petty and ephemeral. In the Essay on Outward Relations the difficulty was especially pressing: but why correct January up to date to fit March, when April will probably leave both untrue or obsolete?

If this little book be found to deserve any praise its value will consist in the attempt not only to realise present forces and conditions in politics, but to get back to principles which stand to prove themselves the master forces in the future as they have done in the past. These Essays are dictated by the conviction that there has been of late too much neglect of principle, that the party is lost in detail, and that it is useless to put before the country long programmes and minute schemes of particular legislation.

But unless the country knows what general line measures will take, it will never give a mandate to the party of reform.

What, then, are the common principles which

ramify into these six widely divergent branches? They can be briefly summarised: Democracy actualised up to the full meaning of Bentham's formula; a degree of political idealism; and a third article intimately bound up with this last, a resolute opposition to the form under which the materialist attacks the State—Socialism. And here we may quote some words of encouragement written by Mr. Gladstone, on January 2nd of this year, to one of the essayists:—“I venture on assuring you that I regard the design formed by you and your friends with sincere interest, and in particular wish well to all the efforts you may make on behalf of individual freedom and independence as opposed to what is termed Collectivism.”

The first Essay, the most general in scope, lays special stress on the great truth that the desire for property is natural and ineradicable; and that the artificial causes which prevent the greater distribution of landed property—that ideal accompaniment of citizenship—should be swept away by a great measure of reform.

The second Essay attempts to justify the past impositions of Liberal principles on economic conditions, and outlines the commercial policy of the future. The application of a somewhat new distinction in monopolies to the problem of municipal enterprise

brings the Liberal position with regard to the extension of State industry into clear relief.

In "Liberals and Labour" we pass from mainly economic to mainly moral considerations. Free play is the one thing needful for labour. But free play implies fair play, and can only be under law. The main point of the Essay is therefore to define the "compromise" between licence and limitation, under which the desired goal will best be attained.

"Liberalism in Outward Relations" develops the veneration for national sentiments and national self-government which has always inspired the party, and appeals above all for a democratising of foreign policy as a substitute for traditional obscurantism.

Foreign policy is followed by Education. In that subject the history of a sectarian monopoly exposes the hollowness of the present Conservative attitude. Present events emphasise the need for a constructive Liberal policy, and lend an interest to the indications here given.

In the last Essay the threads are drawn together, and the Liberal doctrines, which are ideally correlated at the outset by Mr. Belloc, are reviewed in the tangible but tangled frame of history by Mr. Macdonell.

Principles would not be worthily large which did not allow an honest freedom to differ in detail. Not

one of these Essays, probably, but contains opinions, phrases, *obiter dicta*, interpretations of examples, which the other contributors reject entirely, or accept only with modifications. We have made no attempt to reduce the parts of the work to a mechanical unison, confident that general conformity of attitude and harmony of inspiration will be sufficiently apparent. Indeed, our essential agreement is proved by the willingness of each to stand in juxtaposition with subordinate beliefs which he considers doubtful, mistaken, or even absurd : it is the humble microcosm of party loyalty.

One point more : only a great literary artist can be sure that he can so present the past that the whole is scientifically indicated ; only a triumph of style can effect that from what you say of A your judgment on hypothetical B and C can strictly be foretold. Such success could not be hoped for in a work of independent contributions. We could not cover the whole field of politics to treat every article in the party creed and pronounce upon every question in the party problem. We hope the general position is fairly defined ; hints scattered up and down may help to complete some subsidiary lines. The points in the figure which are, perhaps, least precisely indicated are the burning questions of the House of

Lords, the Liquor Traffic, and Disestablishment. In so far as definition of an attitude on these matters is wanting, we are not without hope that possibly in the future Essays on these subjects might be added to the present collection.

J. S. P.

F.W.H.

Oxford, March 1st, 1897.

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ESSAYS IN LIBERALISM.

THE LIBERAL TRADITION.

A Civic Ideal—Now imperilled by Liberal Defeat—A graver Symptom—Possibility of Reversion to old and simpler Principles—Rival Political Theories—That of mere Conquest—Collectivist Attack on Personal Thrift and Property—Socialism, like Jingoism, strong because simple—The Moral to be drawn—Recall the Liberal Principle—The Liberal Citizen—His Economic and Political Independence and Responsibility—The Early Liberals—Their demand for the Suffrage and Repeal of Corn Laws—Social Reform—Abroad: their Sympathy with National Movements—Home Rule—Extension of Suffrage—Citizenship—The Land Monopoly: their Attempt, and our Failure to follow it up—The Plural Vote: another Failure—The House of Lords: Home Rule Bill a Test Case—How the Old Liberals would have conducted the Campaign against the Lords—Our late Policy another Proof of Abandonment of Principle for Detail—Decay of Political Idealism one Cause of our Defeat—Partial Disillusions—Free Trade—The Suffrage—Local Self-Government—Similar Victories of Liberalism on the Continent still less Successful—Consequent Wisdom of the Vulgar—How to revive Idealism—The Power of Conviction—Social and Economic Changes of the Century—Liberal Tradition—Land—The Task Neglected—Our Faults and their Punishment—Conditions still favouring Reform of the Land Laws—The Three Obstacles: Entail, Conveyancing, Landlords' Policy—The Industrial Future.

THERE existed in the minds of those who brought about the political revolution of our century a certain civic ideal which formed the basis of all their public action.

It was simple and clear, as must be all first principles, and especially those which are to command

general conviction or to create an enthusiasm that shall be deep and sustained. It was applicable to all the conditions of a State, because it dealt with the most fundamental definitions of civic rights and civic duties; and, moreover, at the moment when its vigorous exponents opened the battle which their successors are so near to losing, the trend of events appeared to be ranged upon their side.

That ideal now stands in the greatest peril. The political party which has always been its guardian has sustained an overwhelming defeat at the polls. The need of maintaining the central idea, already sufficiently obscured by a mass of irrelevant excursions, is now hardly mentioned; its most important positive applications are avoided in a debate that is lapsing into mere criticism, and that criticism largely personal. Conviction itself has been a great deal more than shaken by a spirit of compromise which is no longer the statesmanlike desire to preserve unity between slightly varying parts, but has become a blind attempt to find something in common between highly differing and even antagonistic interests. For compromise—which, used as a side-method, is a condition of political success—becomes, when it is raised to the dignity of a main principle, the immediate cause of disintegration and failure.

There is in the defeat of Liberalism this yet graver symptom. The party has refused or been unable to say what solution it proposed for the new

problems which new conditions have produced. The political ideal, whose main function should be to mould the material obstacles in its path until they become food for its own continuance, has been allowed to remain unused while these obstacles have grown unchecked in the rapid material changes about us till the disproportion between the old moral forces available for Liberal reform and the new economic conditions opposing them has created a kind of despair.

Is it possible to revert at this hour to the simple doctrines which formed the strength of our first leaders? Most undoubtedly it is. The tradition of these ideas still survives; they are understood by great masses of the electorate; they are even used, upon occasion, as tests of what the attitude of a voter should be upon some particular question. It remains to the party to give the initiative; to determine the times and the places of particular application; to concentrate upon this or that point of importance. But, above all, it is the function of the party to keep clearly before itself and before the electorate the principles that gave it its name, and the inheritance of which it is the warden. If the party forgets the basis of its political history, neglects the opportunities of action, or attempts to abandon some fundamental attitude in politics at the bidding of a material interest, it will disappear.

There are in opposition to it many clear and

well-defined theories, capable of inspiring an equal enthusiasm and conviction, and possessing a most valuable kind of support—I mean that depending upon the prediction of probable future developments.

We have, alien to us, probably antagonistic to us, a dream of mere conquest apart from honour and of the glory of mere empire, separate from self-respecting power. It has proved fatal before now to Liberal institutions, and attenuated though it is, ridiculous so far as its chief actors are concerned, and beneath contempt in its mode of expression, it still possesses all the characteristics of a sentiment likely to grow in strength, and find more and more material for its increase; and it is a sentiment which, at a certain shameful moment, found innumerable supporters among the electorate of England.

There is, again, a theory in economics and politics directly the opposite of our own, cutting at the root of our most obvious principles; and it is growing daily. It involves an attack upon personal production, personal accumulation, and consequent personal possession: a theory which makes the individual and all the individual virtues of small account, and desires to emphasise rather the vague qualities of a State.

It would dissolve thrift, and self-control, and the personal honour which keeps a contract sacred,

and replace them by a State reserve, by State control, and by a State system, releasing men from the burden of private rectitude. It is a theory which is absolutely certain to find stronger and stronger support as our economic system develops, unless it is met by an unflinching adherence to those older political principles which have strength left in them to shape the economic system itself. Though it will be dealt with later in this essay, it is worthy of consideration for a moment in these introductory sentences, because it forms so admirable an example of those clear hypotheses that frequently succeed in transforming the politics of a nation.

This new theory is simple, consistent, and strong. Just as the Jingo finds a substantial support in the actual facts of empire and in the continued immunity awarded to broken pledges and to unprovoked attacks, so the Socialist finds his support in the actual facts of the present system of economics, in the divorce of personality from production, and in the partial achievement of that centralisation of capital which is his goal. He has upon his side all the potential force of a majority which has forgotten what property means, and even of a considerable minority so used to great accumulations as to have equally lost the personal sentiment of attachment in regard to it. He has the additional strength of morally occupying the defensive, saying, "Here is the present system, large capital in few units

employing many wage-earners. I believe it cannot be fundamentally changed, yet by removing a merely sentimental factor which does not concern the wealth itself, I shall be able to use that wealth to far greater advantage for the community."

Is not this theory, with its rigid conclusions, its obvious postulates, and its material surroundings, precisely such as must command, when once it has penetrated the electorate, a wide and an enthusiastic following? Is not that other force—the desire of mere conquest—simple and strong? They are but two of the parties most prominent among the many political opponents of Liberalism; and surely the moral for us to draw from the methods of such antagonists is that only by an attitude equally frank and by an appeal to sentiments equally widespread, can we hope to continue the work of the early leaders of reform. We must be convinced that, whatever adaptation may do in the details of working, the main force in any political movement is some clear and abstract principle clearly understood and continually applied.

The Liberals had, and still have, if they choose to recall it, a principle of this kind. Unpopular as it may be at the present moment to refer the actions of leading Englishmen to anything higher than some petty sense of inconvenience, or some local desire to ameliorate the machinery of the State, the leaders of the Liberal party in the past had a

very simple theory upon which all their political work was based.

Generally speaking, it was of this nature—that no association, especially no association of a political kind, had a right to command the obedience of its members unless those members each had a part in the government of that which they were to obey. I say especially no *political* association. But it would not be difficult to show that in industry, and even in religious affairs, there ran through the whole policy of the early leaders of our party a principle of a very similar kind. Arbitrary government, mere assertion of right in the place of proof, these were the objects of their special and continued attack.

But though this clause is common to all definitions of Liberalism, there is another idea upon which it is dependent.

There ran through the Liberal projects a corresponding definition of the citizen as a political unit. And it was a definition of what should be much more than of what was—an ideal far more than an assertion of existing fact. But every attempt to make the actual citizen approach more nearly to that ideal, every attempt which might make his material and, above all, his moral conditions suited to such a development, every political movement which was likely to produce that ideal by the mere fact of presupposing it, was befriended and ultimately adopted by the Liberal party.

The citizen whom they saw as the best possible foundation upon which a free State could rest was one whose economic and political independence was not, indeed, irresponsible. He was to be answerable, but answerable not to individual men so much as to the general conditions of the nation around him. He was to be an individual possessor and producer of wealth. He was to exercise that faculty of self-restraint which is, even in the narrow field of mere economic science, the basis of all accumulation and of all sufficient material happiness. He was, again, to be so self-respecting a member of a society which depended upon his consent (and which only demanded his obedience on condition that he helped to frame the law), that he might be counted upon not to give his vote upon a general issue for purposes lower than those of the common good.

The men who made the Reform Bill, who repealed the Corn Laws, who demanded a juster basis for the suffrage and a better distribution of seats, who abolished some of the grosser privileges, and who crowned the effort of the century with the recognition of claims to self-government in the secondary nationalities of the empire—these men cannot but have been actuated as a whole by some such theories as these, of self-government, and of that only possible foundation for self-government—the citizen independent of personal control, and conscious also of a moral force restraining him from its abuse.

Most of them explicitly define this position as their own. Charles James Fox did so, Cobbett did so, Bright did so, and, to a certain extent, Cobden also; but even those who did not actually lay down propositions so abstract, and theories which the vulgar, ignorant of English history, call un-English, by their every action in political life showed that these ideals underlay their efforts.

The men of the Reform Bill, as has often been pointed out, demanded the suffrage for their class alone; but they demanded it in terms which showed most unmistakably that it was but a tentative movement, to be followed, as indeed it was followed, by further attempts to admit much wider portions of the nation to the benefits of a representation which they had made, so far as districts were concerned, equitable and just.

The Corn Laws were repealed by men who acted indeed upon an economic theory, but whose enthusiasm was drawn from the fact that the Protection of the day was helping the very few at the expense of the very many.

All that social work of which Lord Brougham was the leader in the earlier part of the century—the attempt to create small capitalists by thrift, and to secure their position by technical knowledge—was of a precisely similar nature.

The great sympathy with the national movements of '48, which the Liberal party, to its eternal honour,

manifested in the face of strong monetary and class interests, proceeded from the same source ; and if, rightly or wrongly, it was on the side of Italian unity and of Hungarian independence, it was because it saw, or believed that it saw, in either case, a question of national self-government opposed to the crude traditional assertion of alien extraneous authority. There was not one of the main Liberal measures, until very recently, in which this ideal was absent ; and if the Home Rule movement meant anything at all, it meant that this very principle of self-government was so sacred as to be worthy of application, even in a case where doubt existed in some minds as to the safety of the experiment. It was an integral portion of the development of Liberal policy, and it finally demanded the self-government of a portion of the empire under the hypothesis (slowly arrived at, but finally established) that such a concession would do less than does its refusal to disturb the unity and the strength of the empire.

Men differed within the party, as they differ to this day, upon the question of how far *all* classes merited that general definition upon which our political ideal was based. Such differences would account for the eagerness of some and the reluctance of others to extend the suffrage at some particular moment ; but they did not differ then, and they need not differ now, upon the advantages of special measures and of a whole line of policy tending to create

that type of citizen which they regarded (and which we, if we are their heirs, should also regard) as the only healthy foundation for the State to repose upon.

That a man should exercise thrift, that a man should own his own home, that a man should not be removed from the conditions under which he has to vote at the bidding either of another man or of material interests as pressing as any tyranny—these are the lines of action which they clearly marked out for us.

They attempted upon more than one occasion to free that important two-thirds of the land of England from the ridiculous monopoly by which ten thousand men possess it in perpetuity. We have not followed them in this attempt.

They have emphasised the primary importance of equality in representation. It seemed to them of the first moment, though it might not be of the first interest, that the national suffrage should be on such a basis that men equal before the law should also be equal in their position as voters. We have relegated that doctrine to an inferior position. We did, indeed, put it into our most recent programme in the phrase "One man, one vote." But to prosecute this, to awaken interest in it—at least a sufficient interest to make it a matter of considerable importance at election time—in that we failed. There were very many elections in which a plural vote helped to turn the scale. It was a matter which,

according to all the fundamental principles that have run through the Liberalism of this century, was most immediately crying for reform. Yet because the individual voter, and especially the more ignorant individual voter (who suffered most), did not feel himself aggrieved, we let the thing go by. The party did not take the initiative of insisting upon it, of bringing it forward as the men of the Reform Bill would have done.

Throughout the century political power, depending upon anything but popular representation, has been belittled by the traditions of our party, and was attacked whenever it showed itself in a combative position. Never has it done so more prominently since the Reform Bill than it did in the case of the Home Rule Bill. Here you had the House of Lords acting as a second Chamber, where most of them were directly swayed by private motives, and could not by the utmost stretch of the imagination be regarded as the trustees of the national will. The greatest of our leaders, in retiring, pressed this as the main point of our campaign, and it was a position most ably seconded for the moment by his successor. It would not be too much to say that at our last effort Home Rule was almost entirely dropped in favour of minor measures.

The men who conducted the first efforts of the Liberal party would most undoubtedly have said of such a campaign that the point for the party to pre-

sent to the electorate was the abstract right of these men to pose as a referendum. They would, and they would justly, have excluded as irrelevant all arguments based upon the circumstance that for the moment the will of the House of Lords jumped with the will of the nation ; they would have insisted upon the point of view that authority for action must first be shown before the action, good or bad, can be approved of. We allowed ourselves to be overwhelmed by that phrase, worthy of simpletons rather than of rational men, that the House of Lords had agreed beforehand with the verdict of the nation.

And what about the case where the House of Lords should not agree with the verdict of the nation? What basis should we have for attacking its composition if it acted, as it very nearly did act in the case of the Irish Land Bill, in flagrant opposition to the opinion of the vast majority of Englishmen? We should have nothing to say. It would be told us, and it would be told us with truth, that we had not discussed, at the most critical moment, the fundamentals of its right to veto Bills, and that therefore the fact that it happened to have gone wrong in one particular instance ought to be judged by the test of expediency which we had ourselves admitted.

There is yet one more point in proof of our abandonment of principle for detail. It is impossible to desire to destroy without also desiring to reconstruct ; or, at least, it is impossible to have such a

desire and to convince any number of reasonable men. What did we propose as an alternative to that which all our traditions condemned as a false and anachronistic conception of the state? Unfortunately nothing. Did not the principles of the party furnish a sufficient basis for such a reconstructive movement? Was there not enough discipline among our members for them to admit some action rather than a mere chaos of disputing theories? There was not, and it is on this account that our cry against the House of Lords made but a small and insignificant noise in the clamour of the recent election. The position would have been saved earlier in the century by these two main factors. First, we should all have been agreed upon the iniquity of such a veto power, irresponsible, and even by its own methods vaguely defined, existing in our community. Secondly (and it is of the first importance), there would have been in our ranks a spirit of discipline sufficient to back up any scheme of reform rather than none. In both these essentials to definite action we are lacking. Now the abandonment or neglect of these traditions will be traced by individual temperaments to very different causes. They are but aspects of the same development, but that development has been so complex as to make it definable only by a separate definition of each aspect.

In the first place, it may be said that political idealism has lost ground everywhere in Europe since the epoch of Reform. It will appear to most thinkers

as a reflect rather than as a cause, but there is much to be advanced on the side of those who lay stress upon this decay as underlying the defeat of Liberalism in England. Not a few of the goals which the Liberal movement set before itself in the early part of this century have been attained, and their attainment has produced the natural disappointment which appears when we are able to compare an accomplished fact with an old ideal.

Free trade has come ; it has enormously increased the prosperity of England, but it has been accompanied by a flood of population not wholly beneficial, and the distribution of capital has not proceeded at the same ratio as the desire for its distribution. It has left the weight of taxation, with which alone political responsibility can exist, still reposing upon an insufficiently large number of citizens.

The suffrage has been extended, but its extension has led to a confusion of different interests quite as much as to expressions of the national will upon clear issues ; and there has grown a certain wide indifference which cannot but be the attitude of men who sit, as it were, as a jury to decide the fate of measures which they necessarily misunderstand because they have had no part in their initiation.

The self-government of the towns and parishes in the country has been achieved ; and though this feature is the least disappointing (perhaps because it is the most recent) of the reforms, yet it is still in

incomplete possession of the strength and permanence of an autonomy whose units are economically independent.

Upon the Continent similar successes have led to comparisons even more disadvantageous. No one, perhaps, especially no one in England, who looked to the possibility of a united Italy saw that nation in the future the close ally of two despotisms, or imagined it would reach the brink of financial ruin through military ambition or an exaggerated colonial policy. Nor, surely, did the strong opinion which ran through this country in 1849 on the side of Hungarian nationality, think to see that force merged in the general attitude of the Austrian Empire. Even those who advocated a free Bulgaria in 1876 could hardly have pictured the direct aggression of Russia on the one hand, nor the obscene tyranny of Stambuloff on the other. And, to take the greatest instance of all, which of those great patriots in France, or of their supporters in England, who maintained their long protest against the usurpation of Napoleon III. foresaw its end? No one, certainly, imagined a Republic born of a disastrous war, crippled with an inheritance of national purpose far stronger than a political passion, and therefore burdened with a military system upon which even the Cæsarism of its predecessor could never have ventured.

In the face of all these facts, it is not wonderful that the more vulgar minds of to-day should con-

gratulate themselves upon a wisdom superior to that of the idealists of an earlier generation. It is even comprehensible that a Mr. Bloggs of Smokeville, tinkering at the wretched details of a royal commission upon nothing, should imagine that he is reaching that object which neither the eloquence of a Charles James Fox, nor the virile energy of the men of the Reform Bill, nor the sound logic of the English economists could succeed in attaining.

For the revival of that idealism there is no way save the old and unsatisfactory method which was well worn when Piers the Ploughman advised it as the remedy of a similar disease 500 years ago—namely, that each man who desires the success of an ideal should keep its enthusiasm with certitude in his own mind, and trust through this to inspire others.

You cannot impose conviction by a system; changes may result from, they will not produce, a political faith; and least of all can one trust to that unhappy modern fetish, material event, to save us from the decay of ideals. Even were the economic tendency of the time setting towards the state which we desire, it would in no way strengthen our ideal, for its strength lies in our desire for a society too perfect for full realisation; *but, on the contrary, the economic tendency appears to be against us*, and if we are to remain in the traditions of Liberalism, it must be by continually asserting, and by attempting

to prove with accomplished facts, that a strong purpose can give an impress to the material surroundings on which it acts ; by showing the economics of a period to grow out of men's conception of the State, rather than admit that they mould that conception ; even by asserting that in the mutual action of exterior conditions and of abstract ideas in the State, the balance of the struggle remains in favour of the human mind.

And this leads us to the second and main aspect of the failure of the Liberal tradition—the main aspect, because, even without that decay of idealism which has just been alluded to, this alone would account for nearly all which the Liberal cause has recently suffered. I refer to the immense change which this century has produced, and which we are now fully aware of, in the nature of wealth and in the consequent condition of society. This may, for the purposes of English politics, be best treated under the effects which it has produced upon agriculture, upon the industries of the great towns, and, finally, upon the meaning of the old political terms.

The Liberal position with regard to the soil was, until recently, the following: that this, the most important of all the means of production, should be unfettered by restrictions made for the benefit of a small class, and that, above all, the partial monopoly which these restrictions created should be abolished.

But this free-trading aspect of their argument had a nobler corollary: they believed that such a free trade in land would recreate in England that peasantry on which her power used to be based, and which two centuries of landlord encroachment and of landlord autocracy in the village have destroyed, perhaps for ever. They noted that in all the countries of Europe where such restrictions had been removed, the land had gravitated by the just rule of a universal demand into the hands of the great majority of the people; they saw these peasant-proprietors industrious, thrifty, accumulating resources for periods of national emergency, and lending the community of which they formed a part a strength and a kind of promised permanence which purely industrial aggregations could never afford. They noted that land offered in small lots for sale fetched a fantastic price in a crowded market, that land offered in larger amounts was bought under conditions far more capricious and in a market far less ready. They therefore justly concluded that the honest desire for possession and for stability which had made the yeomen of the last century, the ideals of which Cobbett was the last and the manliest exponent, were not dead; and they hoped, when the barriers should be removed, that this eminently English force would reappear in the national life.

This was the tradition they left us: we have done nothing at all with that inheritance. The

economic absolutism of the landlords has remained untouched, while we have been—we and our opponents with imitative, emulous vigour—engaged in fashioning organs of expression which must remain dumb until that absolutism is removed.

The men who originated the Liberal policy found an agricultural England in which ten thousand men owned two-thirds of an area upon which two million were employed. They had before them, and handed down to us, the task of reforming a state of things in which the mass of the English peasantry had sunk to be the farthest removed from citizenship of any class in civilised Europe. Were they to return to-day they would find that we had made no single advance upon the path they laid down. More than a quarter of the people of England are involved in this system; we have given them the suffrage, local councils, and a school—of a type, by the way, as far removed as possible from their control: we have given them nothing which should make these conditions have meaning or vitality. When the century opened, a small class possessed a monopoly of nearly all the land and most of the borough towns. Of these it retains, generally speaking, the mastery, and has added to its wealth the unearned increment of those new growths outside the older limits of the towns. It holds its monopoly by a system of entail with which we have tinkered, in a farce of reform which had the deliberate intention

of leaving the heart of the evil untouched ; it is protected by a system of law which the class itself has either created or modified to its own interest ; and we, whose policy and tradition it is to break down the barriers which changed conditions have made meaningless, leave this monstrous protective system unopposed and almost uncriticised.

The evil is accentuated and our lack of policy in the matter brought into relief by this fact. We have hesitated until the task of freeing the land has become vastly more difficult than it was some few years ago. An accursed habit of delay, suiting rather timid or hypocritical men than those certain of their creed and willing to enforce it, has corrupted the politics of our time. It heaps up the material for revolution or for decay, and talks prettily of development. With political rights this hesitation and cowardice is less fatal. The State continues, the rights are obvious ; they are granted to the sons or grandsons of those who fought for them, and no great danger has been run. With the reform of economic conditions it is otherwise. They change under our very hand ; and when a State is in peril, or a class of citizens oppressed by the false distribution of wealth, the remedy must be applied at once, or the disease will have grown past cure. We granted the suffrage in 1884, when a more logical habit of mind would have yielded it in 1848, or even in 1832, and the result was not very much the

better for the delay: but the yeoman class which might have been called into existence in the middle part of the century, would be created now with far more difficulty. It is but one in many examples of the fatal result of slow progress when once the goal is plain. Ireland taught us this lesson first. Every reform has been granted too late; until the last and most just of all may be doomed, if we delay longer, to fall into the same category, and the self-government be granted by a Liberal or Tory administration at a time which finds the people of that island as bitterly hostile to England as are all the members of the race whom England has driven over seas. And so with the land. The time when small capital would have sufficed for the beginnings of the new class, when their local spirit and desire of possession still lingered, and when accumulation of wealth would have been rapid in a time of high prices—this time has passed. Our modern conditions would need a capital out of the reach of most of this class—a class which has acquired the habit of drifting into the towns, or of remaining in a thorough dependence in the country. They are losing the love of soil and of locality. And, above all, prices have so fallen that the beginnings would be precarious; that accumulation of capital, which is the backbone of a social class, would be extremely slow.

Nevertheless, the demand for the soil retains sufficient vitality to give a basis for reform. Amid

all the peevish complaints which the monopolisers of the land are raising, the fact remains that the difficulty of sale and the low prices which they are perpetually quoting, apply far more to the larger than to the smaller divisions of the soil. Whether it be that the justly eminent position of country squire is not so coveted as it was wont to be by the brewer, the money-lender, and the dealer in sudden stocks, or that the appetite for a rank so easily acquired in this country is somewhat affected by the heavy drawback of having to maintain more than the old pomp with half the old revenue, the great estates are finding but a poor market. With the comparatively rare opportunities of exchange in small holdings this is not the case; the market is invariably more crowded, the demand is more brisk, the prices paid are much higher in proportion.

It may be urged that under these conditions things would find their own level, that small holdings bringing a larger value would be the ordinary form in which land would be offered for sale, and that without the interference of legislation that division of the soil and creation of a peasant class which all men of sense desire for their country would be effected of its own accord. Economic circumstances frequently operate thus, remedying in course of time the evils which similar forces have brought into being. Indeed, it may be asserted that under conditions of free exchange very much the greater part of remedial action

is of this nature ; but in the case of English land, the exchange is not free ; it is, in practice, less free than in any country of the West, if we except Russia, with whose laws, however, the readers and indeed the writer of such an essay as this are imperfectly acquainted.

Three causes interfere with such freedom : entail, the complicated rules of conveyancing, and the policy of the territorial class. With the last-named it is impossible, or extremely difficult, for legislative reform to deal. The landlords feel, as the members of an American trust feel, that the immediate personal advantage to be gained by selling in the more profitable manner is outweighed by the disadvantage which would fall upon his class if this "breaking of the ring" should become common—an accident that would destroy monopoly itself, and with monopoly all the permanence and stability of their social and economic position of vantage. There is, indeed, an avenue of attack by way of leasehold enfranchisement ; but this, applying rather to urban than to rural conditions, must be dealt with later. Indeed, the only effectual weapon to use against so time-honoured and subtle a conspiracy is that of counter-organisation, in which Ireland has been so eminently successful. To counsel action of this kind in England would be futile in a moment of material prosperity. The sharp lesson of poverty which a disturbance of foreign trade (so likely with a protective Government in power) may

read England at any moment would immediately show the value of such a combination.

With the two other fetters which bind the exchange of land in England reform can deal. It is possible to destroy entail; it is possible to simplify title by registration.

The history of England since the Middle Ages is the history of a slow and successful usurpation of the rights of the people on the one hand, and of the Crown upon the other, by a large territorial class. Until the period of that industrial revolution which has so signally increased the wealth, the population, and the perils of England, this class was supreme. During even our own time its influence has been modified rather than destroyed, and the country is still ruled by a legislature, a judicature, an armed force and an executive drawn from an upper class of which the territorial interest supplies the main element and direction. And you will find but a very small proportion of judges, officers, ministers or representatives abroad who are not connected with or descended from this ring of families. And this assertion is in proportion truer as we regard the higher and more powerful positions; for while it would be easy to discover a second-rate consul or curate, or an urban magistrate who has no link with the country houses, to find a series of ambassadors, judges, or bishops in this position would amount to a stupendous miracle.

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Entail—the power of insuring their order and its particular members against the consequences of recklessness, of disease, or of crime—is the test of the success of this class. When England possessed a king, and when the central power, whose main function it is to protect the community against the insolence of the few, was a reality, the growing claim was vigorously fought. It is almost the measure of the central power at any period to mark the statutes restricting the practice, or its equivalent under the circumstances of the time. For two hundred years or more that restraint has been absent, but a community which is at last approaching to self-government is at once able and bound to restore it. The reform would be drastic, but it would not be complicated; it would be a violent change, but there is no reason why it should be a prolonged one. A Bill as simple and as direct as those which our opponents were in the habit of drafting when they created the various parts of this dangerous system would suffice to remove it; and even where custom and judicial decision, rather than law, is at the root of the mischief, we can find—if we go back to an earlier and more vigorous period of Liberalism—plenty of models for destroying an evil system by positive enactment.

Finally, a Registration Bill would remove what is, after entail, the main restriction upon the acquirement of land in reasonable holdings by that large

class of citizens who have neither the instincts nor the accumulations of the great landlords.

The timidity which has been shown in the prosecution of this absolutely necessary reform would lead one to suppose that legislators have some personal interest at stake. The Liberal party has acted in the matter as though the words of Sir Frederick Pollock were as infallible as his legal knowledge is undoubtedly remarkable ; and the word "impossible" which he has attached to this reform appears to have been transferred from the devout opinion of an eminent lawyer (and his able but less eminent colleagues) to the creed of an active and competent party. Indeed, so strongly has that legal profession, which is (after the landlords) the main element in our legislature, protected its inertia in the matter, that, were not the suspicion unworthy, one would ascribe it to their intimate connection with the class which their inaction has defended.

There is no civilised country in the world in which this tabulation of the land has not been undertaken. The mediæval state made it the very basis of organisation and government ; and we can boast to-day that a title to land can be *approximately* ascertained (with inordinate expense, varying inversely with the size of the holding) which in the somewhat less developed times of William the Conqueror could have been immediately verified by consulting a register of state. It is indeed impossible to see what motives impede

this very useful reform, unless one is to fall back upon conjectures which in such discussions are never mentioned, lest they should excite too strong emotions and too vigorous action ; which of all things our modern reactionaries deplore.

With the breaking for good and all of the pernicious custom of entail, and with the freeing of land exchange by registration from the inordinate charges of legal procedure, the first and most important stage in the re-acquisition of the land by people will have been achieved. We should have the material gain of a land system in line with every other economic fact of our time, and the moral gain of being free from the reproach of hypocrisy which must always attach in a self-governing community to a party which advocates a systematic reform in words, while, lost in deliberate inaction, it favours the few masters of the community.

The question of agricultural land has been touched upon at this length because, on the one hand, the greatest potential material for future citizenship lies in that unhappy and oppressed class which tills the soil of England, and because, on the other hand, the men who monopolise this soil have been the bitterest, the most inveterate, and the most hypocritical of those who have actively opposed the liberties of the nation. But industrial questions absorb a larger, though not a more important class, and while the evils are far more difficult to reform as a whole, there

yet remain many (and these at the very root of our industrial problem) which the party must deal with at once if Liberalism is to have any meaning for the English artisans.

The conditions which industrial development have brought about in England are the very antithesis of those which Liberalism devises in the State: capital held in large masses and in a few hands; men working in large gangs under conditions where discipline, pushed to the point of servitude, is almost as necessary as in an armed force; voters whose most immediate interests are economic rather than political; citizens who own, for the greater part, not even their roofs.

There could be no state more inimical to the ideals which the Liberals of Europe set before themselves. So desperate have its chances become that a few zealous and strongly convinced men have attempted to discover an avenue of egress, by way of denying that right of private property upon which all the civic virtues are based. Dazed by the violent rupture which has already taken place between personality and production, the Socialists have in every country declared for the consummation of an evil which has already spread so wide; they would wish to increase the semi-servile condition of wage-earners, already corrupting the politics of England, until it should cover every family in the State; and they seek to remedy a very present and terribly practical evil by

sweeping away the highly chimerical and theoretic barriers which human religion and a sentiment as old as the race have opposed to their experiments, among which may be numbered the sanctity of contract, the love of freedom, the virtue of self-control, and the inviolable right to property acquired by labour or by self-denial.

HILAIRE BELLOC.

LIBERALISM AND WEALTH.

The Traditional Connection of Economic Science with Liberal Policy—The Modern Type of Professor and his Statesman Pupil—Nature of Recent Attack on Free Trade Principles—Protectionist Revival—Lord Salisbury on Free Trade—The Charms of a Protective *Régime* described—Recrudescence of Tory Error—Lord Salisbury and the "Truth"—The Two Habits of Mind: (1) Optimism of Averages and (2) Pessimism of Exceptions—Free Trade Policy justified even for Agriculture by Comparison of Wages in 1770, 1850, and in the period 1860-1891—Hence Two Policies erroneously Inferred: (a) the Policy of Whiggism, or Inaction; (b) Policy of certain Self-styled "Progressives"—Liberal *v.* Collectivist Theory of Industrial State—Catch-words Criticised—The Cause of the Reaction at the last General Election; a Parallel drawn from De Tocqueville's "Recollections"—Property a Postulate of Political Thought—Property in Land—Principles of Liberal Land Policy—The Pressing Need for Free Trade in Land—Flabby Reasoning of those who inveigh against the Manchesterian School—The Results to be anticipated from an Extension of Artificial Monopolies in accordance with the Socialist Plan—The Question of Municipalisation—History of Municipalities—Liberal Framework—How Cobden fought for Manchester—Definition of Liberal Attitude towards Municipal Enterprise—Natural Monopolies are the Proper Sphere of Municipal Enterprise—Doctrine of Natural as opposed to Artificial Monopoly explained, defined, and illustrated—Absurdity of the Socialistic Claims to an exclusive Share in Municipal Spirit—The "Thin-end-of-the-wedge" Theory examined and found wanting—Return to the Monstrous Evils of Uncontrolled Monopoly, especially in America—Principle of a Graduated Income Tax—Taxation and Representation—Privileges and Vested Abuses—The Difference between Reform and Revolution.

THERE was a time, not very far back, when it was as natural and inevitable for an economist to be a Liberal as it is now for a licensed victualler to be a Tory. In the days of Cobden, a thinker in the economic sphere did not attempt to divorce theory from practice. One who had seen the nation groaning

and starving under a protective system, or had marked the vast and rapid expansion of our wealth and resources which followed Corn Law Repeal, could never have expounded in a merely academic spirit the doctrines of international trade. Then at length economy deserved its epithet of political, when a great party set itself to apply on a national scale the Free Trade principles which science had slowly disentangled from the accumulated experience of much misgovernment, extending over many kingdoms and many centuries. Accordingly, for a brief period even the theorist was not ashamed to declare himself a party man. Of course, the economist always remains at heart an advocate of Free Trade; but in the present epoch, when philosophic doubt assails every religion which is not established, and every interest which is not vested, the professor of economics is developing into a casuist; he contemplates with stoical indifference the regeneration of a policy which he knows to be ruinous; and instead of teaching the broad truths by which his predecessors convinced a nation, he prefers to sow doubt among a chosen few by hunting up negative instances, rehabilitating lost causes, and endeavouring with every species of subtlety and refinement to make the worse appear the better reason. The idea of free and unimpeded trade, the determination to sweep away duties, monopolies, and legal embarrassments are forgotten, and the British politician is invited to watch Sicily and Greece reviving

their respective fortunes by putting an export duty upon sulphur, and restricting the production of currants. No wonder, when they are taught to watch a doubtful exception and to forget a general rule, that responsible ministers are now proposing to "restore" prosperity by excluding enterprising aliens, whether men or animals,¹ by refusing a limited supply of cheap brushes presented to us by foreign prisons, and by "protecting" a part of our commerce worth £100,000,000 against a residue worth £600,000,000.

A sneer at Cobden, a contemptuous allusion to Manchesterianism and the "dismal science" help nowadays to make up that small but choice reservoir of blind abuse, upon which Social Democrats and Primrose Leaguers draw for the great work of irrigating electoral ignorance; and so far, certainly, the crop looks green and promising. If the hopeful sheaves are to prove chaff on the threshing-floor of the next general election, it may be predicted that the Liberal party will effect it by once more bringing round to its side that hearty support of unbiassed educated opinion which, fortunately, always means success at the polls.

Now, if the free-trade principles of Bright and Cobden and Mill—so largely adopted and put into force by Peel and Gladstone—had only represented

¹ By a mild provision of the Animals Diseases Act, the *animals* may come in if slaughtered at the port of debarcation. It is uncertain whether the *men* will be equally favoured under the Alien Immigration Bill.

the mental attitude of a few leading thinkers with no considerable following and no practical achievements, or if the free traders had been mere opportunists, who adopted a cry and inserted it in the party programme to meet some passing mood or to win some temporary support—a progressive who called himself a Liberal might have had some excuse for joining complacently in the general chorus: “True, true,” he might have said, “but their teachings are quite discredited now; *our* principles are brand new, thoroughly in accordance with modern needs; and if they do not suit they can be altered.”

An attitude of this sort surely implies the very grossest lack of political insight, to say nothing of political morality. For to deny the continuity of Liberal tradition and to break with the past is equivalent, under our system of government, to a declaration of political bankruptcy. Happily, however, the mass of the party is still intact, determined, “tho’ fallen on evil days, on evil days tho’ fallen and evil tongues,” to resist with all its force every encroachment of monopoly, whether sectarian or commercial, upon the legitimate freedom of the individual, and equally determined, when the pendulum of power swings back again, to depress those monopolies and extend that freedom in the religious, the political, and the commercial sphere.

It is with the past and present relations of Liberalism to wealth and industry that the present

writer proposes to deal. Some well-tried principles will be examined in the light of reason and experience, and if they are found to be good they will not be discarded on the count of age. There will be nothing new to present-day politics—unless, possibly, the attempt to reconcile practice with principle ; nothing original, except the determination to avoid gaseous opportunism.

Another Essay shows how the oppressive incidence of the Corn Laws and other protective duties helped to create a vigorous Liberal sentiment. The conditions of oppression and misgovernment speedily gave the Reform party irresistible political power ; that this power was directed constantly by intelligent and intelligible principles is explained by the splendid combination of philosophic breadth and political genius manifested by so many of its chosen leaders. To explain and justify the guiding principles of Liberal economics is becoming more and more necessary as each day carries us further away from the period of Corn Law Repeal. Free Trade was taught to the people in those days, firstly by argument, secondly, when argument had succeeded, by the comparison which experience afforded. Then for twenty or thirty years the arguments were forgotten, but belief in Free Trade was regarded as a condition of mental sanity. It was an axiom of English commerce and politics. The few Tory Protectionists who sat for agricultural constituencies were crotchety persons

who gave considerable amusement but no uneasiness. Only within the last five years of trade depression has the real Protectionist agitation set in. However well advertised, a quack medicine will not sell in a healthy community. The inventor of a panacea will never make his fortune unless the variety of diseases which he engages to cure is indisputable. For certainty of the disease creates in the human mind a vague presupposition in favour of the promised remedy. The same consideration applied to Economics explains why the quack remedies of Bimetallism and Protection were able to make some head in the lean years of 1890-1894.

In the spring of 1892, at Hastings, Lord Salisbury discovered, when discussing the imposition of taxes upon imports, that there was "a good deal to be said for hops." But alarm began to show itself among his supporters in the manufacturing towns, and two years later the Conservative leader, speaking at Trowbridge, felt it necessary to reassure the town populations by an emphatic utterance before the general elections:—"No doubt I shall be told by some hostile critics that I am adverse to Free Trade, and that I am proposing a duty upon corn. I beg to nail that lie to the counter before it is uttered." (A difficult feat, one would think, even for Lord Salisbury.) "I know that Free Trade is and must be the policy of this country. I know that Protection is dead and cannot

be revived." These are strong words, but deeds are sometimes even more eloquent. In May, 1895, Lord Salisbury was in opposition; in June, 1896, he was in office, and in that month his Ministry passed the Animals Diseases Bill, a piece of protective legislation of the very crudest type. It is calculated that, for every breeder of cattle in England there are 5,000 consumers of meat. But the Government has decided that in the interests of the one, those of the 5,000 are to be sacrificed. The grazier is not to be allowed to buy the cheap cattle which the farmers of Iceland and Canada offer him, and butcher's meat is to be made artificially dearer by a sweeping act of prohibition.

But, it may be said, even granted that Lord Salisbury has been playing fast and loose with the country, is not a return to Protection justifiable? Ought not we to go back to the good old days of high prices and high wages?

Let us consider this argument. An ounce of practice is said to be worth a pound of theory; and in the attempt to justify from history half a century of our economic policy, the scientific basis of the Liberal position will gradually emerge. At the last election a poster was extensively promulgated in one of the Somersetshire divisions exhorting the electors to "vote for the Conservative candidate and the good old times." A few of the older electors may have remembered those

good old days, when a poor man was hanged for stealing two shillings, when the ordinary cause of death in winter was starvation, when no Dissenter, Roman Catholic, or Jew was qualified to hold any official position, when the national universities were carefully and jealously barred against great classes of conscientious citizens. In short, throughout this country those good old times were marked by perpetual and artificial famine. To bolster up a territorial aristocracy, the stupidest of whom might fatten on a sinecure while their more mediocre brethren ruled the country in the interests of their own class, corn was barred from our ports, intelligence was excluded from our civil and military services. By the end of the year 1815 (to quote the unimpeachable authority of Professor Cunningham), "taxes had been laid upon everything that was taxable, and there was no incident of life in which the pressure of taxation was not felt." Who has not seen the walled-up windows of old houses, and wondered at the ingenuity of financiers who discovered that even light is a taxable commodity?

The charms of that Protective *régime* are portrayed in a lively passage written by Sydney Smith for the *Edinburgh Review* of January, 1820.

"The school-boy whips his taxed top, the beardless youth manages his taxed horse, with a taxed bridle, on a taxed road; and the dying Englishman, pouring his medicine, which has paid seven

per cent., into a spoon which has paid fifteen per cent., flings himself back upon his chintz bed, which has paid twenty-two per cent., makes his will on an eight-pound stamp, and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid a licence of £100 for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is then immediately taxed from two to ten per cent. Besides the probate, large fees are then demanded for burying him in the chancel. His virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble, and he will then be gathered to his fathers to be taxed no more.”¹

But though you may destroy a Tory error in one form, it will appear in another:—*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret*. It has “re-curred” so recently as October 30th, 1895, in a

¹ Seventy-four years later America was suffering from an almost equally severe protection plague, and an interesting parallel to this passage may be quoted from a brilliant speech by the member for Missouri, delivered in Congress at Washington on the Wilson Tariff Bill of 1894:—“God could have made this world, if He had wanted to, with exactly the same climate and soil all over it, so that each nation would have been entirely independent of any other nation. But He didn’t do that. He made this world so that every nation in it has got to depend for something upon some other nations. He did that to promote kinship among the different people. Let us drop this unnatural business and return to the rules of sanity. There is no end to the ingenuity of man. You can fix up a scheme, if you want to, for raising oranges in Maine, but a barrel of those oranges would make William Waldorf Astor’s pocket-book sick. You can raise elephants in the jungles of Vermont, but it would take all the inheritance tax on the Gould estate to pay the cost. You can raise polar bears on the Equator if you spend money enough, but it would take a king’s ransom to do it.”

speech delivered at Watford by no less a personage than Lord Salisbury. After remarking, "We have had the strongest cause to lament that, though the Protectionists were resisted at the time, their warnings were not listened to more carefully," the Prime Minister proceeded: "I cannot expect the Liberal-Unionist friends around me to sympathise with the feelings with which I look back to this old Protectionist struggle." No, he cannot. "I know we were wrong in what we said, but we had a truth at the bottom of the fears we expressed, and this generation is finding out that all has not been so smooth as the prophets of that day told us it would be."

What, we may ask, was the "truth" that lay at the bottom of the fears of the old Tory party? Apparently the prophecy that the repeal of the Corn Laws would ruin agriculture. Now, there are three classes connected with agriculture—the landlord, the tenant-farmer, and the labourer. The Protectionist argues that the high prices created by the Corn Laws meant prosperity to the farmer (who could sell at a big profit), high rents to the landlords, and high wages to the labourer. The prosperous farmer, it is said, could obviously afford both. Now, in the first place, it is a noteworthy fact that while under Protection between the years 1815 and 1846 rents remained stationary in England, in the twenty years of Free Trade which followed they rose 26½

per cent. So much for the landlord ; and as to the farmer, the advance of rents which followed the introduction of Free Trade may be taken as indicating a substantial increase in his prosperity also. Indeed, it might have been predicted that his release from dear food, dear clothes, and the high prices of all agricultural implements would not do him any great harm. Nor need the Cobdenite shrink from the latest phase of the question. For serious as has been the depreciation of agricultural land values in Free Trade England during the last fifteen years, the distress has, at any rate, been immensely alleviated by the cheapness of food, clothes, and all the instruments of production. Contrast this with the unmitigated misery and bankruptcy of the unfortunate farmer in "protected" America.

The "truth," then, to which Lord Salisbury alluded as at the bottom of the fears of his party must have referred to the impending ruin of the agricultural labourer. By Free Trade he would, of course, stand to gain enormously from the cheapening of food, clothes, and all articles of consumption. But this gain, we are to understand, has been more than counterbalanced by an immense drop in wages. The "theory" (stated in its naked simplicity) is that high wages necessarily follow high prices and low wages low prices. And the Tory members who represent county divisions constantly assert that

wages depend on prices. They say to the rustic :
“ You cannot expect a rise in wages unless you get a rise in prices.”

Let us consider the facts. During the year 1895 the price of wheat averaged about 25s. the quarter. In the period between 1786 and 1846 the average yearly price of wheat fluctuated between 39s. and 126s. the quarter. During the last ten years it has varied between 21s. and 35s. If, then, there is any truth in the Chaplin-Winchilsea doctrine, we shall expect to find a very large fall in agricultural wages in the latter as compared with the former period, more particularly when we reflect on the late increase in the buying power of gold in terms of commodities. But what has actually happened? Why, the very converse of what our political squires teach their dependents to expect and believe. The enormous fall in prices has been accompanied by an equally remarkable rise in wages. And the philosopher, when he adds the real to the nominal advance (remembering that one sovereign represents in buying power at least as much as did 30s. fifty years ago), may well be forgiven if he proclaims himself to be not only a convinced free-trader, but a dogmatic optimist.

The question, indeed, is one of such fundamental importance that no apology is needed for considering it in some further detail. The statistics in themselves form a complete vindication of Free Trade, and

upset the position of orators—protectionist or collectivist¹—who, trading on their own ignorance and the sympathy of their hearers, join in vilifying the Manchester school and the results of free-trade policy. These would-be Galileos of sociology look upon the world at large, and England in particular, with a sort of mental squint. The frame of mind which prompts their utterances has been already described in an English classic. Carlyle, in “Past and Present,” alluding to their predecessors who used to declaim in favour of the retention of the Corn Law, says there was “no argument advanced for it but such as might make the angels and almost the very jackasses weep.” The opponents of Cobden, however, had an excuse which will always possess a certain validity in human affairs. Free Trade was then an untried, almost an unknown system, and Corn Law Repeal presented itself to their slothful minds not as a scientific and certain reform, but as a leap in the dark which might result in national ruin. They, therefore, only sinned against reason; their followers sin also against experience.

Mr. Asquith, indeed, has recently warned his party against indulging overmuch in “an optimism of averages.” “We have witnessed,” he said, “a sensible and remarkable rise in the level of material comfort, but we are too apt to forget that that very

¹ I make the distinction here, although, as will appear later, it cannot ultimately be maintained.

average rise is perfectly consistent with deeper¹ depression and more glaring contrasts than have ever existed before."

The warning is characteristic of a reformer, and is at once the best proof of the splendid success of Liberal principles of economy and finance in the past fifty years, and the best assurance that, by renewed vigour in their defence and exposition, and renewed confidence in their application and extension, the party will again be able to add to its glorious roll of legislative enactments in favour of the freedom of commerce and the equality of opportunities.

But the question arises—Is the present a time in which the public mind is lulled in an optimism of averages? On the contrary, it is surely a period of scares like "Made in Germany"; and English people are beginning to indulge very widely in a spirit which may fairly be called "pessimism of exceptions."

Let us take a specimen of the data upon which each of the rival positions is based. Mr. Ernest Edwin Williams, the now notorious author of "Made in Germany," tells us that, like all our other trades, shipbuilding is in a bad way. "Still more remarkable," he continues, "is the drop in our supply of foreign

¹ "Deeper depression" may refer to the increasing gloom of the Independent Labour Party. As will appear later, the best statistics show that the reverse is true of economic conditions. A labourer of fifty years ago, who then earned an average wage, would now be far below the average, and would probably be classed with the submerged tenth.

warships from 12,877 tons in 1874 to 2,483 tons in 1894."

I append a table (borrowed from the *Progressive Review*, vol. i., p. 282), to illustrate the duplicity of the author and the ostrich-like digestion of a public which has already swallowed four editions.

After inquiry, I should much doubt whether these figures are reliable or correct.¹ But they are the figures used by Mr. Williams as most suitable for his brief. A pessimist who wishes to frighten the public will learn much from a practical lesson in "how to select the shipping accounts."

Tonnage of War-Ships built in the United Kingdom for
Foreign Countries.

Tons.				Tons.			
1870	...	...	970	1890	...	...	3,437
1871	...	...	80	1891	...	...	300
1872	...	...	40	1892	...	...	2,792
1873	...	...	280	1893	...	...	2,471
1874	...	...	12,877	1894	...	...	2,483
1875	...	...	12,280	1895	...	...	4,152
1876	...	...	14				

¹ A friend gives me the following as the approximately correct figures for the years 1891-1896. Torpedo craft (which of course form a very important item in the trade) are excluded.

				Tons.
1891	...	...	...	2,300
1892	...	...	...	12,900
1893	...	...	...	6,000
1894	...	...	...	875
1895	...	...	...	4,740
1896	...	...	...	30,000 (apparently a record).

Every shrewd observer can parallel the case almost daily from his newspaper. But the nation has no redress against those who ignorantly or deliberately juggle with its accounts, and present disconnected aspects of its commercial balance-sheet.

If anyone ever reaches chap. viii. of "Made in Germany," entitled "What must we do to be saved?" he will find that Mr. Williams, omitting an obvious reference, "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor," provides a wonderful substitute for an old answer. The substitute, of course, is "Fair Trade." Not a word of the disastrous consequences it once entailed upon Great Britain, not a word of the wretchedness it has created abroad and in America. No syllable escapes Mr. Williams with regard to Protectionist experiments in our own colonies. They are already groaning under the attempt to keep up their "native," or rather exotic, industries for the benefit of a few manufacturers. They are already beginning to declare for Free Trade¹ (as we did), after experiencing and suffering Protection. But a wide study and comparison of the results of Free Trade and Protection would not harmonise with Mr. Williams's conclusion. The conclusion, in fact, was the chief element in the original premise, and the argument runs:—"I am a Fair Trader; I have gathered a

¹ Compare especially recent legislation in New South Wales and Queensland, and the victory of the Free Trade party in Canada.

number of exceptions to the progress of a Free Trade country; therefore England must adopt Fair Trade." He even disguises the remarkable circumstance that the expansion of German commerce has been synchronous with her approximation to Free Trade: the Zollverein, which for England would be a relapse towards Protection, was for Germany an important step towards Free Trade. But all this has to be painfully and laboriously concealed by "Made in Germany." One hundred and sixty pages exist for that one chapter. *Parturiunt montes* and an unobtrusive mouse appears, labelled "the Tory doctrine of Commercial Retaliation." Or, to adopt a more majestic metaphor, Mr. Williams, instead of dedicating an altar to pessimism, has erected a pyramid in honour of Protection, from a rubbish-heap of ruined firms and rejected statistics. But a Liberal will remember that even a pyramid has its use—as a mausoleum. Yet some may be staggered by "Made in Germany's" easy confidence and certainty of tone. For the benefit of these weaker brethren, a few plain facts are worth recording.

About the year 1770, during that era of protection and "prosperity" to which benevolent Tory orators invite all grumbling workmen to return, the average wages of the agricultural labourer in England ranged from 5s. to 7s. a week. In Yorkshire the average was 6s. a week, and in Lancashire 6s. 6d. Flour at that time varied from 2s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. a stone, so that it

can easily be imagined how an agricultural family lived. Some years ago an old man near Huddersfield was talking about the high prices of flour in his boyhood. Someone interrupted, "Why, how did you manage to live?" "Live, sir; we didn't live, we clammed." So, too, the thrifty peasant's family, in Cowper's "Winter Evening," had little fire—a "scanty stock of brushwood"—less light—"the taper soon extinguished." And for food—

"the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter costlier still.
* * * * *
With all their thrift they thrive not."

Wages in the towns were of course slightly higher, but the boroughs were even more rotten from the municipal than from the Parliamentary standpoint. Indeed, their condition was insanitary and degrading to the last degree. The rate of mortality was fearfully high, and the life of a workman with 10s. a week in the towns was even more deplorable than that of of his fellow in the country with 7s.

Now it is often asserted that Liberal financiers have deliberately allowed agriculture to go to ruin for the sake of the manufacturing interest:—in short, that the landlord has been sacrificed to the manufacturer, and the agricultural labourer to the operative. We need not pause to show how the assumption of increased manufacturing prosperity here tacitly made contra-

dicts the usual argument against Free Trade. But of course one is employed in the country, the other in the town. For the Tory countryman is a curious contrast, or, at least, an interesting complement to his town brother. The two are brought up on completely different diets; their minds are illuminated by diametrically opposed propositions.

Now, when we compare the wages of 1770 with those of 1850 or 1851, after four years of Free Trade, we shall expect to find, on the theory of the *rural* Conservative speech, that in the great iron, woollen, and cotton industries of the North, where the vast manufacturing development had taken place, agriculture, at any rate, is in a very bad way. Indeed, in the 'thirties and early 'forties, many of the small farmers were scared at the idea that they would be ruined by the prosperity of the towns. A story is told how, at the height of the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, a Mr. Chonler (one of the Duke of Rutland's tenants) made a striking suggestion for the employment of the yeomanry in defence of their supposed interests. He reminded the farmers that they had all the horses, and could ride the Free Traders down. "Yes," retorted the Cobdenites, "and you have all the asses too." Nor can it be denied that the figures abundantly establish the reputation of the "stupid" party. In Lancashire the wages of the agricultural labourer had risen from 6s. 6d. in 1770 to 13s. 6d. in 1850; in the West Riding of Yorkshire

they had jumped in the same period from 6s. to 14s., and in Derbyshire they had reached 11s. In short, agricultural wages in or near the great manufacturing areas had risen on an average fully one hundred per cent. But in the eighteen southern counties mentioned by Arthur Young the rise averaged only fourteen per cent. for the same period. Thus, in 1850 wages were still only 7s. in Gloucestershire and Suffolk, 7s. 6d. in North Wilts, and 6s. in Essex. Hence the proposition that agricultural depression results from commercial prosperity, or that the growth of manufactures spells ruin to agriculture, is not only untrue, but the exact reverse of the truth. These reckless falsehoods need periodical exposure by a proof more elaborate than the appeal to science and common-sense.

To return to wages, which we left at 1850, four years after the repeal of the Corn Laws. The natural question to ask, in face of the present agitation for "fair" trade, is this: Has the increase of national wealth kept pace with the population? And secondly, has the improvement in the condition of the workmen kept pace with national wealth? The answer of every trained statistician and of every competent authority is fortunately the same. All agree not only that our national wealth has grown at a far more rapid ratio than our population during this period, but also that the position of the labouring classes has enormously improved. The authority of

Sir Robert Giffen might be regarded as a sufficient and satisfactory court of final appeal ; but those who wish not only for the opinion of the expert, but also for a glimpse of his method, cannot do better than refer to a paper read by Mr. A. L. Bowley before the Royal Statistical Society in 1895. The convincing brilliancy of the method adopted need not concern us now. Suffice it to say that a Royal Commission has already approved his reasoning, and admitted its accuracy. Nevertheless, since the information is comparatively new, and the source comparatively inaccessible, I shall not apologise for quoting words which deserve to be weighed by every social reformer who has turned his back on the social and economic principles of the Liberal party, and is dissatisfied with the half-century of free trade and free enterprise which it has inaugurated and carried through. The nation has been largely freed from private monopoly ; for fifty years it has made uninterrupted and unprecedented progress in culture, power, and comfort. Will not Englishmen think once, twice, and thrice before they exchange the assurance of increased and increasing prosperity for the dim Utopias of State monopoly depicted by a gentleman known to Social Democrats as "our local horganiser" ?

Mr. Bowley sets out from the question, "Who are benefiting most by the development of industry, those who obtain profits or those who receive wages ?"

"The first step," he continues, "towards answering this question is to find the actual changes in the total sum paid in wages and in the average money wage, and also in the gross receipts of profits and interest, and the average income of the nation as a whole." This step Mr. Bowley essays, correcting the changes in the purchasing power of gold by Sauerbeck's index numbers. "Leaving entirely out of question not only the causes of these changes, but also the distribution of wages among different classes of labour and the irregularity of employment, I have merely endeavoured to make as accurately as existing data allow a statement of this nature. In 1891 1,000,000 men, women and children, in representative groups of trades earned per head 40 per cent. more in actual coin, and 92 per cent. more, if the increased purchasing power of money is allowed for, than their 1,000,000 predecessors in the same trades in 1860 and similarly for intermediate years."

Finally, Mr. Bowley restates his conclusion with equal force and with some observations which are well worthy of the closest attention. "While we congratulate the whole nation on the immense growth of its national prosperity, so far as this is measured by gross receipts, it is not fair to grudge the working classes the share which they have gained. Those who receive the average, or more than the average, may be fairly considered to have obtained a wage which allows them fully to employ all their faculties

in their well-earned leisure ; but this cannot be said of the equally large number whose earnings are below the average. In so far as actual want is now only the lot of a small proportion of the nation (though intrinsically a large number), and comfort is within the reach of increasing masses of workmen, *the greatest benefit of this prosperity has fallen on wage earners ;* but this is only the righting of injustice and hardship." Wages, then, like incomes, have doubled in real value in thirty-six years. Just as the increase in the world's production of gold has failed to maintain an equal ratio with that of the world's production of commodities, so English population, in spite of its vast increase, has been quite unable to keep pace with English wealth. Yet we are told that Cobden's policy has not justified itself. Real honest labour, either with the hand or with the head, has nowhere in Europe and never in European history been so well rewarded as in the Free Trade England of to-day.

Not that these reflections should lead Liberals to policy of sluggish inaction. Timidity in applying ideals will only retain members who are already a source of weakness. When fruit is over-ripe it may be allowed to drop off into the Tory basket. On the other hand, there can be no graver error than to suppose that the progressive measures of the last fifty years have produced a real increase of national prosperity and of national happiness merely because they were progressive in the sense of being *changes*. That

seems to be the idea nowadays of a certain number of self-styled progressives. These people seem very anxious to distinguish themselves, firstly, from the old Liberals who have principles; and, secondly, from the Socialists who have principles. But the true progressive is the old *and* the new Liberal, who has had principles and who keeps them still in use. The untrue progressive is an opportunist who trims his sails to every passing breeze. He wants to play the middleman between Liberalism and Collectivism; and he will succeed for a time until some strong man comes forward with one or perhaps two ideas, and with a scheme sufficiently clear and sufficiently workable to arouse enthusiastic support and opposition. Then he will be forgotten. The new movement, if it deserves the name, has been begun in London. But London is no place for such a movement. The machinery of neo-progressivism may vibrate there for years; there will be the sounds of the grinding, but nothing more. We shall get neither raw material nor finished article from this political race of non-productive middlemen.

Future political changes in our economic system must therefore be in one of two directions. If the first, we shall proceed on present lines in favour of more and not less individual enterprise and Free Trade by throwing land, as we have already thrown corn, into the free and open market. We shall aim at discouraging monopolistic tendencies, and at

encouraging co-operative societies both for distribution and production. Such a theory will not favour the idea that State management is in itself desirable in the industrial sphere, or that an army of State officials will conduce either to political freedom or national wealth. Yet, as will appear later, there will be work enough and to spare for the ratepayer's representatives—local and imperial—in the control or administration of natural monopolies, those important exceptions which prove the ordinary laws of wealth. Red tape, however, is on this our theory to be regarded in general as the symbol not of democracy but of bureaucracy. In other words, we assert that national wealth and national character are naturally to be built up on individual wealth and individual character, and that in the mutual play between the two forces the most positive and also the most important action is that exercised by the individual on the community. Our State is not, and never will be, a *deus ex machinâ* who is to provide overpaid work for the unemployable at the expense of the employable, and equalise the advantages of the deserving and the undeserving. Nor will it, under the influence of the new morality, dub the citizen who pays twenty shillings in the pound a plunderer of the people.

The upholders of the other theory¹ flaunt before

¹ Collectivist writers, it may be noticed, endeavour to prove not only that their ideal of a State ought to come, but also that it is coming.

the world an ideal of a State as a vast "going concern"—a combination of a limited liability company which manufactures everything with a gigantic store which distributes everything. This ideal implies the permanent adoption of two kindred economic errors—monopoly and protection—both of which imply a rise of prices and a decrease of wealth. For the would-be industrial State (whose salaried employees have little or no personal interest in cheapening the products of, say, State cotton or woollen mills) will find it impossible to compete with individual owners or co-operative firms where the managers or all the producers have a direct, personal and over-mastering motive for economising the methods and improving the products of their manufactures. The State, therefore, must first pass a law forbidding private cotton mills to compete against its own. Then it finds that it has lost the foreign cotton trade; no goods can be sold abroad. On the contrary, cheaper and equally good material is being poured into the country from America, Germany, India, and Japan. The monopoly is therefore protected by heavy tariffs against foreign competition, and the

In fact, the subjective certainty of the change is made a prominent "argument" for its objective desirability. The subjective certainty is complacently established by what I will call the Fabian syllogism:—*Major Premise* : By our law of evolution, nothing that did not exist in the past, but does exist in the present, can exist in the future. *Minor Premise* : Capitalism, which did not exist in the past, does exist in the present. *Conclusion* : Therefore, Capitalism will not exist in the future. Quod erat fabiandum.

two policies whose partial adoption (when England was dominated by a Tory squirearchy) ruined the country and degraded the working classes, reappear in an extended and aggravated form in the bitter cry of those citizens who are almost as unfit for direct production as the old squirearchy proved itself to be.

It may be argued on the moral side, that universal poverty will lead to universal brotherhood; that beggars, if only collectively dependent on the State, may exhibit a fine harmony of moral natures. There will be a touching equity in the procedure of the State when the high nominal salary is paid—say one-third in cash with a State I O U for the other two-thirds; and the labourer whose real earnings amount perhaps to only half his old wages will console himself, forsooth, for his want of boots and coals by the thought that now he is a gentleman with an official status and earning a *salary*.

To these moral reflections a Liberal will reply by placing individual independence above State dependence, and comfort (even when extorted from a capitalist) above indigence (even at the lavish hands of the State).

The moral musings of a Collectivist Agamemnon (who presumably will consent to be a director of the big company he is trying to promote) remind one of a very similar disposition to set up as philanthropists which manifested itself among his economic ancestors, the Tory landlords of Corn Law days.

They were "the friends of the unprotected," and professed great anxiety for lunatics and for the paupers whom their own Corn Laws had produced. In 1839 Sir James Graham, in resisting Mr. Villiers' annual motion for the repeal of the Corn Laws, spoke of "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn," the neat thatched cottage, the blooming garden, the cheerful village green. The repeal of the Corn Laws would lead, he added, to a great migration from all this loveliness "to the noisy alley and the sad sound of the factory bell."

Three years later one of the lecturers for the Anti-Corn Law League made his way to Sir James Graham's estate and did not omit an ironic reference to the landlord's idyllic picture. "What!" he said, "six shillings a week for wages, and the morning sun, and the singing of birds, and sportive lambs, and winding streams, and the mountain breeze, and a little wholesome labour—six shillings a week and all this! And nothing to do with your six shillings a week, but merely to pay your rent, buy your food, and lay by something for old age! Happy people!"¹

"Merrie England" shows plainly enough that the modern monopoliser has the same idyllic cant in reserve ready to be produced for the benefit of the poverty-stricken State employee of the future. The present tactics of these amiable friends of the working man are to disguise from him the steady improvement

¹ *Vide* John Morley's "Life of Cobden," i. 157, 210.

which his condition is undergoing, and the solid comforts which year by year are being added to his lot. They attempt to distract his reason and excite his imagination by vulgar and overdrawn pictures of the squalor and wretchedness in the worst quarters of our great cities. Here we detect a temper worthy of the revolutionist who wants to upset society to its own certain misery, and then strut over the ruins he has himself created. On the other side stands the true social reformer, who nowadays frankly recognises the splendid progress of the last half century. Like the revolutionist, he refuses to acquiesce in inaction. Unlike him, he acknowledges with gratitude what he has learnt from his predecessors, and regards their conspicuous success as an earnest of that which will attend future efforts, if only they proceed from the same great principles towards the same desired goal.

It is sometimes asserted that there are quite new conditions to face.¹ Society is so totally different to what it was in the days of Cobden and Bright. Humanity itself has undergone some violent change. Burns was wrong: a man is not a man "for a' that." We are wonderfully in advance of our fathers. The up-to-date ephebe is a Socialist, an Evolutionist; he can talk about the organic Unity of the State, and he professes an imperial instinct. Let us admit it at

¹ Cf. the false hypothesis which destroys so much of the value of Mr. Benjamin Kidd's "Social Evolution."

once : there has been a change—in terminology. The young man is deceived by the long Latin and Greek words, and so equipped thinks he means something different from what his father thought under more homely terms.

The organic unity of the State is one of those pretentious metaphors transferred from biology to politics which suggest one kind of unity by another and totally different kind. The good of the community, the danger of sacrificing the whole to the part, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, were conceptions perfectly understood by the Corn Law Repealers and by those who abolished the Test Acts. Similarly, *evolution* is a long and somewhat stupid substitute for progress. Improvement in the common run of mankind depends upon the occasional “eccentricity” of individuals. Where free play is possible an individual will here and there strike out new adaptations to meet new wants. It was not the State or Society that made the steam engine but Stephenson and Watt, though without the State or Society the steam engine would have been an invention *in vacuo*. But the organised monotony and mechanical unity of a Socialistic State is the negation of free play, and consequently its appropriate motto should be not evolution and progress, but degradation and decay. *The imperial instinct* is nothing more nor less than pride in the Empire, and that has existed as long as the Empire itself. Lastly,

we all not only are but always have been *Socialists*, *i.e.* members of society. The truth is that the vagueness of the term Socialism has led to so much futile argument that it ought never to be used without being defined. "Christian Socialist," for instance, is simply an equivalent for one who recognises (or desires others to recognise that he recognises) that he is a Christian member of society.¹ Our religious ancestors spoke of the brotherhood of man. "Brother" is antiquated. Apparently "Socialist" is thought to suggest more sympathy with the submerged tenth.

The young man, therefore, who has this terminology at his command is not necessarily, or as a rule, a very different being from the corresponding type twenty,

¹ Since writing the above I am sorry to say that I have come across the word in a debased sense as a synonym for one who cannot see the difference between *meum* and *tuum*, wherever "mine" or "thine" happens to be landed property. "Yet into whose pockets does the whole of this value go? Not into the pockets of the men and women who create it, but into the pockets of those who, often simply because they are the sons of their fathers, are the owners of the ground-rents and values. Robbery is the only accurate word which a Christian Socialist can use to describe this state of things . . . Now what we Christian Socialists urge is, that a Parliament of the people, if they will but take the pains to send honest and obedient delegates to carry out their will, ought gradually, but as quickly as possible, to reverse that process, to take off all taxation from the articles of the people's consumption, and by degrees to tax the land values, till at last, taxing them twenty shillings in the pound, you take the whole of the land values for the benefit of those who create them."—Fabian Tract, No. 42. One wonders whether any money ever went into the pocket of the author of this sophistry "simply because he was the son of his father." He seems to think that the conjunction of terms in Christian Socialism is meant to be not a truism, but an oxymoron.

thirty, or forty years ago. But there is one striking difference. Then the claim of a few to be leaders and guiders of Reform—a claim based upon knowledge, ability and enthusiasm—was conspicuously recognised by the great body of the people. Nowadays reformers are legion. There is no coherence because there is no knowledge. The new East End curate who has contrived to surmount the barrier of the Pass Schools and his Bishop's Examination, or the new lady novelist of the middle class, who has surmounted the still more feeble barrier which the publisher opposes to want of matter, form and style, thinks that he or she has a social mission and is its born and accredited leader. A hold on economic and political science, with a wide experience of different classes, is in many quarters regarded as a positive obstacle for "The Work." An hour's conversation in any East End Collectivist club, or the scraps of conversation gathered after an exceptionally good West End dinner are an excuse for a pamphlet on the Social Problem; and a few pages will suffice to abolish property and reconstitute society. Heat is mistaken for light, ignorance for sympathy, and inability to discern distinctions for the power to do away with them.

A dim apprehension of some fanatical upheaval was undoubtedly the cause of the tremendous reaction at the last general election. How many men of broad and liberal views, whose hatred of Tory class

legislation yields to nothing except the fear of licence and anarchy, were driven behind the wall to take refuge, like Plato's philosopher, in a despairing political inactivity?

England, happily, does not deal in Socialistic revolutions; but the late revulsion of feeling is an exact parallel to that which De Tocqueville has so inimitably depicted from personal observation in his own country. The government of Louis Philippe was upset in 1848 by a sudden and accidental rising of the excitable population of Paris. The opposition were astonished and terrified on finding themselves not reformers but revolutionaries. There was an interregnum of anarchy.

"From the 25th of February onwards a thousand strange systems came issuing pell-mell from the minds of innovators and spread among the troubled minds of the crowd. . . . Everyone came forward with a plan of his own. . . . These theories were of very varied natures, often opposed and sometimes hostile to one another; but all of them, aiming lower than the Government, and striving to reach Society itself, on which Government rests, adopted the common name of Socialism." History tells us of the ludicrous failure of these schemes for destroying inequalities of fortune and for providing specific remedies against poverty. The momentary success of Collectivist theories could not alter the desire for private property. The idea of State confiscation

merely gave a vent to the ingrained selfishness of a would-be Socialistic population. "The time had come to try to turn to account any scapegrace whom one had in one's family. If good luck would have it that one had a cousin, a brother, or a son who had become ruined by his disorderly life, one could be sure that he was in a fair way to succeed ; and if he had become known by the promulgation of some extravagant theory or other, he might hope to attain to any height. Most of the commissaries and under-commissaries of the (new) Government were men of this type."

The result might have been predicted. Throughout France, "fear, which had first displayed itself in the upper circles of society, descended into the depths of the people, and universal terror took possession of the whole country."

A general election with universal suffrage followed, and to the astonishment of its promoters the Constituent Assembly which was returned "contained an infinitely greater number of landed proprietors and even of noblemen than any of the Chambers elected in the days when it was a necessary condition, in order to be an elector or elected, that you should have money."

In short, in the France of '49, a population infinitely poorer and far fonder of ideal remedies than our own of to-day hastened to reject with alarm and disgust the attack upon individual ownership.

"Property had become, with all those who owned it, a sort of badge of fraternity."¹

So striking an instance of national feeling must fasten the attention of political thinkers. The "sacred rights of property" have always been scoffed at by the noisy and the thriftless. But "*vox populi vox dei*;" and a feeling that permeates and, as it were, cements society must be rather postulated than assailed in the legislation of the future. An illustration of the proper acceptance of this principle may be taken from our method of dealing with the problem of landed proprietorship. The English land laws are undoubtedly amongst the worst and most disastrous relics of class misrule. Something must be done. There is much talk of the nation taking over the land by purchase or confiscation. But no genuine Liberal who is alive to the principles of his party can wish to turn his Government into either a prosperous thief or a pauper mortgagee.

The party has a land policy already—a policy which rests upon two great principles in addition to the cardinal assumption that property has certain rights, and that those rights must be respected. On the one hand they have always asserted that trade ought to be free and unimpeded; that no industry can be in a satisfactory state into and from which capital and enterprise cannot pass freely. Secondly,

¹ We have quoted from a recent translation of De Tocqueville's "Recollections" by Mr. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos.

they maintain the Benthamite maxim that, other things being equal, the greater the distribution of wealth the greater is the amount of happiness.

These principles have been applied successfully to many problems of the past. It is through them, too, that we have already found to some extent the solution of agricultural distress. But, although much has been done by earnest advocacy of allotments and constant legislation, our agricultural system remains essentially diseased for want of the one and only cure, Free Trade in land. Monopolists are never a satisfactory class for the nation, at whose expense they grow fat ; and if they grow thin owing to foreign competition, which emphasises their indolence and incapacity by under-selling them in their own markets, they are hardly satisfactory even to themselves. This growing feeling of discontent among the landlords themselves with present conditions may fairly be taken as an indication that the question is now well within the sphere of practical politics. Indeed, it is so clearly a matter of common-sense that it might be put with confidence to the country at almost any moment. An artificial monopoly resting on entail and the countless expensive embarrassments by which the law checks free and cheap sale in so many different ways and places, is, like the House of Lords, an anachronism of the most fatal character in a country which claims to be enlightened and free. How would the Bradford cloth trade continue if every mill-owner's eldest son,

however incompetent or unsuited to business, was declared sole heir by the law, and forbidden under any conditions to sell? Or, again, to take a case parallel to that of non-entailed property, how would Bradford flourish if every sale of cloth or machinery were only effected by means of a long legal process which added twenty, forty, sixty, or a hundred per cent. to the cost of the thing sold? Yet such is the method of our land laws, and under the circumstances it is a miracle that agricultural distress in England is not the atrocious evil which Mr. Chaplin would have us believe. If we may follow the analogy of what happened after our former Free Trade legislation, it will be difficult to make an exaggerated prediction of the prosperity which will ensue upon the throwing open of heavily-mortgaged and ill-managed estates to capital and enterprise. Once the way is opened for individual yeoman enterprise, and the trammels of the law are removed, agriculture will at last become a free trade. Instead of a dependent and "protected" class, too poor to be enterprising and too timid to bargain properly with the landlord, there will arise under the new conditions a very different type of farmer,—a man of vigour and versatility, who will prosper by understanding his business instead of spending his energies in trying to drive out by law (at the expense of the consumer) foreign competitors whom he ought to be able to conquer by merit. Then at last the prophecy

of Bright will be realised. "If the farmers," he said, "exercise their own energies and cultivate the quality of self-reliance, I am convinced that this country, with the finest roads, with the best markets, and with a favourable climate, will be found to triumph not only in her manufactures, but also in her agriculture."

When this first great step has been taken, there will be nothing easier than further to facilitate the *cheap* acquirement of allotments and to encourage small holdings or co-operative farms. But this is one of the all-important minutiae which would be worked out by the various local authorities in their own way; for in the future it seems probable that only the great measures will be framed in the House of Commons. Municipalities and local bodies will arrange details in accordance with local needs. But the Parliament of Great Britain or of the Federated Empire will have to think more and more of the broader lines of national and imperial development, and less and less of interfering with the applications and deviations which local bodies choose to initiate in their own proper spheres of activity. General principles, therefore, are becoming more and more necessary to the existence of a political party, and the tendency to be overwhelmed by detailed schemes should be stoutly resisted. The country does not want to be flooded with particular measures, but it does want to know what general line legislation will take.

The Liberal party is wrongly suspected of Socialism—that is, of regarding increased State activity as an end in itself. Why? Simply because its members have frequently defended particular measures, such as recent Factory Legislation, in a “particular” spirit without making clear the economic and moral principles which underlay them. Yet the right course was plain and obvious. Thus it is by a straightforward reference to the doctrine of Economic Waste that the strictly materialistic as distinguished from the moral justification should be maintained not only for free *and* compulsory education and for the Factory Acts, but for all legislation, past or future, which tends to prevent men, women, or children from suffering in their capacity of wealth producers.

The economic reason for the State sending children to school is identical with that of the farmer for training a young horse; the economic reason for the State keeping children at school is identical with that of the farmer for not working a young horse.

True, the school of thought which refuses to admit distinctions is at present predominant—at any rate, in academic circles—but the plain man will readily admit that there are two perfectly distinct and equally valid lines of reasoning by which the political philosopher may advocate an individual measure, a general principle, or a complete system. They may be briefly represented by the words Wealth and

Virtue. Happiness is the middle term which indicates their connection. And what a vast amount of flabby reasoning has supported itself on the ambiguity of this middle term ! Liberals are willing enough to close with their opponents in either sphere, but one knows well enough the danger of directing attention, even in a single essay, to the proved laws of wealth and material prosperity. "Sordid inhuman wretch," "brutal Manchesterian," are the terms applied to those who demonstrate the national loss of wealth which must result from the substitution of "Fair" for Free Trade or of monopoly for competitive enterprise. By the strange irony of fate the inheritors of the wealth and comfort derived from the triumph of Cobden's principles are reversing the process. The moraliser may draw a melancholy satisfaction from the thought that their impoverished sons will be Liberals.

It matters little whether the pockets of the average man are picked in the name of the State or of a class within the State. An artificial monopoly is a tax upon the consumer, less obvious perhaps, but not less impoverishing, than an ordinary Customs duty. A monopoly has exactly the same effect as a heavy duty. Cigars are a case in point. The Governments of France, Italy, and Austria proceed by monopoly ; Germany has practically Free Trade. The consequence is that cigars of equally good quality may be bought in Germany for little more than

half the sum which they cost in the other three countries. As a natural result, Germany alone has an export trade.

This illustration is not, of course, intended as an attack upon the raising of revenue from cigars. If indirect taxation is unavoidable, luxuries are obviously the proper things to tax. What I do point out is the effect of State monopoly upon prices and production. My example only illustrates the truth obvious to every unmuddled brain, that every extension of monopoly means a shrinkage of our foreign trade and a decline of the national income. Economic ruin will assuredly be the escort of the Socialist's monopolistic Utopia ; and England will only have emerged from feudal poverty to sink back into fraternal famine. We shall exhibit the splendid isolation of a nation with no foreign trade ; we shall be freed from the evils of competition, for we shall have no markets ; there will be no talk of dangerous commercial rivals, for we shall have no commerce ; the dream of universal equality will at last be realised in a monotony of universal pauperism.

In the original Fabian Essays, however, the programme advocated is less nebular, and the construction more easily destroyed. Now English Collectivists may be divided into the economically enlightened and the economically unenlightened, into those who see and those who are blind to the evils of monopoly and Protection. The first—a comparatively small

class—is composed almost entirely of a leading section of the Fabian Society, which (since the publication of the Fabian Essays) has made a great advance towards an appreciation, if not admission, of the soundness of the Liberal standpoint. The change is marked by some recent declarations quoted by the *Economic Journal* for October, 1896, and by the publication of a paper by Mr. Sidney Ball on “The Moral Aspects of Socialism.” In his view, Socialism, “so far from attempting to eliminate ‘competition’ from life, endeavours to raise its plane, to make it a competition of character and positive social quality.” The Fabian idea of industrial combination “is not an artificial creation, but a normal development of modern business. It represents a monopoly not of privilege but of efficiency.” He admits that *now* municipal enterprise is kept up to the mark by private competition, but hopes that on its disappearance the same results will accrue from rivalry between “the local pride and civic self-consciousness of municipalities.” But successful municipal management—a point unfortunately obscured in the pamphlet—has always been in the sphere of *natural monopoly*. It will continue to be so; and the instances by which Mr. Ball tries to decorate his idealistic basis only show that even *his* comparatively modest erections for the future are founded on sand.

The other—far larger—class of Collectivists appeal solely to the emotions, and are dangerous in

proportion to the ignorance of the voting population. Their chief spokesman is typical of the revolutionary who in all ages blocks the way to reform. Mr. Keir Hardie will accuse Liberals of want of sympathy with the "submerged tenth" because they refuse to be a party to his schemes for equalising matters by submerging the remainder. Let him do so; true sympathy is the sympathy bred of knowledge, not of ignorance; and Mr. Keir Hardie's examination before a recent Royal Commission showed that he had not yet mastered even the elements of the Labour problem. Fifty years of solid service to the cause of Labour will surely serve the Liberal party as a rampart against the attacks of wild, reckless, and ill-informed agitators.

Yet the record of the past is but the earnest of present and future usefulness. Society is ever changing, ever in need of reform; and administration, even if perfect to-day, would call for modification to-morrow. And now especially the immense extension of local government in town and country demands the earnest, sympathetic, and intelligent attention of all thoughtful Liberals.

On the financial side there are the difficulties connected with the question of municipal ownership which ought to be frankly faced. An unexampled opportunity is here afforded for applying Liberal principles to new conditions. That the instance is a crucial one will be readily admitted by the Socialistic

Progressive ; indeed, it is the position which he is most fond of choosing for his violent attacks upon the older Liberal economists. Let us first remind him of an incident in the past ; it will serve to illustrate Liberal tradition and to emphasise not only the steady and continuous determination, but also the long line of successful reforms, which have marked the party in its policy of substituting for the old mismanagement by vested abuses a new power and a new authority in the administration and control of local affairs and local rates by the people of the locality.

In 1837, at the age of thirty-three, Richard Cobden was actively engaged in directing a business which his own enterprise had just started, and to the success of which his undivided attention was necessary. But the great Municipal Act making a charter permissive if a majority of the ratepaying inhabitants petitioned the Crown in Council had only just been passed. Mr. John Morley inimitably describes "the muddy sea of corruption" stirred up by this permissive clause :—"All the vested interests of obstruction were on the alert. The close and self-chosen members of the Court Leet and the Streets Commission, and the Town Hall Commission, could not endure the prospect of a system in which the public business would no longer be done in the dark, and the public money no longer expended without responsibility to those who paid it. The battle between

privilege and popular representation which had been fought on the great scene at Westminster in 1832 was now resumed and fought out on the pettier stage of the new boroughs. The classes who had lost the power of bad government on a large national scale tried hard to retain it on a small local scale.”¹ Everyone in Manchester who had a vested interest in an abuse (in other words, every Tory), from “the low-minded and corrupt rabble of the freemen and pot-wallopers,” upwards to the wearer of the feudal livery himself, resisted the movement in favour of a charter. But they were not alone. “Will you credit it,” wrote Cobden to a friend, “the low, blackguard leaders of the Radicals joined with the Tories and opposed us?” He calls it “an unholy alliance.” But surely, as Mr. Morley points out, it is neither unnatural nor uncommon for bigotry and ignorance to join hands.

Now from the very beginning to the triumphant conclusion of this movement to incorporate the borough of Manchester, Cobden worked heart and soul, making what must have been enormous sacrifices of money and time in the interest of his town. For three weeks he was constantly occupied at the Town Hall merely in exposing a great bogus petition got up by the Tories. When he wrote on July 3rd, 1838, to his Edinburgh publisher, he had been “incessantly engaged at the task for the last six months.”

And now your modern Collectivist in the same

¹ “Life of Cobden,” Jubilee Edition, p. 122.

breath exploits municipalities and vilifies the fame of Cobden. The irony of things is often pathetic ; but here, perhaps, there is something more than pathos in the thought that "strikes along the brain and flushes all the cheek." Political ingratitude is fast becoming a fine art in public life.

The first business, then, of the Liberal party was to abolish the old and hopelessly corrupt system of local government by semi-hereditary and totally incompetent authorities. The work of construction was laborious. Between the great measures of 1835 and 1882 no less than fifty-five Acts having reference to municipal corporations received the royal assent. Still later came the two Local Government Acts of 1888¹ and 1894, which were intended, to quote a competent authority, "to reduce to something like order the chaos of overlapping areas and conflicting authorities."

Thus the *structure* of local government in the United Kingdom (though not in Ireland) is in some rough measure complete ; it is to the *working* of the new system that the politician must now direct his attention. And it is for the Liberal party—the party of reform—to infuse into the democratic institutions which it has created that spirit and those principles which can alone ensure them a useful and peaceful development : for in England the stability of an in-

¹ A Liberal measure passed under the auspices of a Conservative Government.

stitution will never be threatened provided its utility can be proved.

Now here at length Liberals have a really great opportunity. The attempt to "capture" the Board Schools in the interest of sectarian orthodoxy has been accompanied by a parallel attempt to "capture" the municipal councils in the interests of economic heresy. Both attacks should be repelled, but they should be repelled with discernment, for in municipalities and local administrative areas there are only a limited number of men with time, willingness, and capacity to serve the public. It is highly necessary in many cases to consider the character of a candidate as well as his "platform"; and in a period of reaction like the present a sprinkling of able Collectivists are a valuable leaven to a lump of councillors who erect cheese-scraping into a principle, and regard inactivity as a public duty. But there is a certain school of quasi-Liberals—the opportunists or middlemen of whom I have already spoken—who step in at this point and assure both sides of their sympathy. If a measure proposed by the Collectivist party seems to be catching the public eye, these gentlemen leave the Liberal ranks, rush in front, and advertise their connection with what they fondly imagine to be a winning cause. At the same time they declaim to those who are less "advanced" than themselves, in the long-winded and meaningless phraseology of politicians whose one idea is to avoid being pinned

down to any principle or any belief, "that while desiring to emphasise the necessity for a progressive policy of constructive social reform, they are yet not prepared to affirm that the case for complete Collectivism has yet been satisfactorily established, or that every fresh extension of State activity in the industrial sphere is by any means necessarily conducive to the advantage of the nation."

There is all the difference in the world between the blind and undetermined middle course of these untrustworthy political adventurers and the clear-cut attitude towards municipal enterprise and other similar problems which is marked out for us on the undeviating lines of Liberal principle. And yet this is also a middle course, and, moreover, a middle course which will take the Liberal for a few stages in the same direction as the Socialist party. These stages may be all roughly characterised as belonging to the sphere of *natural monopoly*.

Now, opposition to monopoly is of course a cardinal article in Liberal faith. The political and economic grounds for the assumption have already been suggested. Hence our political policy. In the past we have swept away many of the monopolies in trade, in government, and in religion—monopolies established in their own interests by kings, squires, or clerics. For the future we refuse to re-establish them at the bidding of Collectivists for the benefit of an army of State officials.

But some monopolies are natural and necessary. Land is a complicated but indubitable instance ; for land does not exist in absolutely unlimited quantities. This circumstance has very properly led in most countries to laws discouraging or prohibiting the accumulation of vast estates. A "corner" in land cannot be contemplated with equanimity by any patriotic statesman. This, of course, was an element in the philosophic and statesmanlike idea which prompted the Death Duties in Sir W. Harcourt's great Budget.

Now the Tories, as we have seen, derive their very existence as a party from the long, systematic, and successful attempts of their political ancestors to make bad worse, to turn a natural and unprotected into an artificial and protected monopoly. Squire legislators piled up a vast artificial superstructure on the top of the comparatively harmless limits which Nature had prescribed. Thus a natural evil, comparatively harmless if reasonably controlled, has been deliberately intensified and aggravated by crass class legislation. When the House of Landlords has been released from the duty of voting on agricultural questions, as brewers are already relieved from the duty of adjudicating on licensing questions, a good Land Bill will open up a new field to individual enterprise, and at the same time immensely relieve landlocked municipalities. But a further consideration of the problem is forbidden by the compass of this

essay; and therefore, without even pausing to dwell on the scandalous anomalies arising from the non-taxation of land values in towns, we must pass on to a somewhat more novel application of these same economic principles—these same time-worn and time-honoured tenets of Liberalism. The problems of municipalisation will serve as a test case; and if our principles give no clue to a solution, it may be admitted at once that they are not only time-worn but out-worn.

For the purpose in hand a “natural monopoly” will be roughly but sufficiently defined as any form of industry, distributive or productive, which does not under normal conditions admit of competitive enterprise. Take one or two clear and undoubted cases of natural monopoly—coinage, sanitation, water, gas, and tramways. In each of these cases some individual or corporate body must carry on the undertaking; for—in a modern municipality, at any rate—all five are regarded as necessary to the convenience and happiness of the citizens. The question is, Shall the consumer (deprived of the guarantee of reasonable prices which competition would give him) have any control over these industries? Four possible systems suggest themselves—uncontrolled monopolies managed by private companies, similar management under public control, and public management by a government either irresponsible or responsible to the people. Now the most zealous voluntaryist will usually admit in his calmer moment that coinage is the proper function

of the central, and sanitation of the local authority. But every schoolboy, or at any rate every Macaulean schoolboy, knows how ignorantly and corruptly our currency was often managed by irresponsible monarchs, and how the absence of sanitation in pocket-boroughs and other towns previous to the Act of 1836 demonstrated the local unfitness of the equally irresponsible potwallopers.

The irresponsible monopoly of government may fortunately, however, be neglected as impossible under our democratic system, and we are left with the general admission that in the British democracy whose officers are responsible to the people, coinage and sanitation will best be managed by the central authority. The reason is not far to seek. In the first case¹ profit is inexpedient, in the second, impossible.

But what is to be said of the three remaining instances? There is not the same consensus of opinion. Municipalisers and voluntaryists can both produce corroborative instances. And here, unfortunately, the press "inquirer" usually stops and scribbles down or omits the figures according as they subserve or prejudice the moderate or progressive brief which he happens to be meditating. It is admitted, however, by every unbiassed judgment that in many cases of gas and water, and some few of

¹ It is interesting to notice that, when Mayor of Birmingham, the present Secretary for the Colonies laid down the same principle with regard to water. He held that it should be municipalised and sold at cost price. The council have accepted and acted on this ruling.

tramways, the municipality has stepped into the actual management, with consequences economically and politically justifiable; and that in all three cases the public interest has invariably demanded as a minimum from its public representatives the most vigilant control and the utmost caution in granting and framing leases.

The reason is not recondite, and the facts, far from revolutionising economic theory or suggesting even a *primâ facie* case for Socialism, are the very negative instances which are wanted to prove to a demonstration the soundness of Liberal maxims, and the national benefit derived from Free Trade and an unrestricted market. For it is exactly where competition is seen to be difficult or impossible that superintendence or even actual management by the central or local authority tends to become expedient or imperative. Two sewers or gaspipes laid down by two different companies cannot well compete for draining or lighting one house in one district. Two sets of tram lines cannot run down one street. Nor will a burgess expect to get his water rate lowered by a competition of three or four reservoirs each bidding for his custom. Here, then, are three clear cases of natural and necessary monopolies. Where is the supposed difficulty for an old-fashioned follower of Cobden? *Laissez-faire* is a principle which the great Reformers applied broadly and rationally, not with the stupid narrowness attributed to them by so many

modern critics. The recognition of the expediency of collective bargaining, along with the right to combine, are important elements in the Liberal conception of economic and political freedom ; and from the very first our advocacy of a free and unimpeded system of commercial exchange, both at home and abroad, has been seconded and supported by a well-defined and thoroughgoing attitude towards all sorts and conditions of monopolies. Indeed, almost every Liberal movement from the 'forties to the present day has been emphasised by an effective onslaught upon some artificial monopoly or legalised exploitation of the consuming public for the benefit of a class. Nor has Liberal *doctrine* at any rate been less explicit in expounding the correlative principle—the necessity for public control of natural and necessary monopolies. But the Liberal politician is often behind the theorist, and sometimes even over slow in appreciating coming practical needs. It is more than twenty years since Mr. Chamberlain gave a practical exhibition of the doctrine in his great municipal achievements as Mayor of Birmingham. But, strangely enough, even he does not seem to have enunciated those broad principles which explain the sagacity and soundness of his financial proposals. And, generally speaking, Liberal leaders have been singularly backward in grasping and enforcing the whole theory of municipal activity. Its vast and growing importance was, indeed, splendidly recognised

by Lord Rosebery in accepting the chairmanship of the London County Council. But have Liberals defined its field, explained its limits, and supported its proper manifestations with the enthusiasm of discernment?

We fear not; and the unnecessary intellectual coldness exhibited in some quarters towards the legitimate extension of municipal enterprise has proved as disastrous as the hot-headed emotionalism which welcomes every proposed extension of public industry and officialdom, local or Imperial, as necessarily a step in the right direction. Whigs tremble and "Progressives" chuckle at the thought that gas, water, and tramways are "the thin end of the wedge," that they will lead to the municipalisation of glass, cotton, and all other trades. But, as we have shown already, the reasons which make for municipal action in one case do not apply to the other. The very men who on principle uphold public control or management of gas will throw their whole weight into the scale against any agitation in favour of turning cotton into a public monopoly. For gas and water are not for export; they are produced merely for local consumption, and, being natural monopolies, they must be produced and distributed by one man, or by a single organisation.

Clearly, then, the consumers, being unable to rely upon competition for giving them the article at the lowest possible price, must take some measures to

provide that the price shall have, at any rate, a superior limit. Two courses are open. The Council may either form a committee to control the private company, or may themselves take over the company's works at a valuation and form a committee to administer the department. Every thorough free-trader must agree that in such cases one or other of these alternatives ought to be adopted by the community in its own interests. In deciding *which*, vague talk about the municipality as an ideal wealth-producer may be at once dismissed.

The decision ought to depend upon certain local circumstances. It is obvious, for instance, that in the villages and lesser boroughs the number of men both competent and willing to exert themselves in local administration, always limited, is often extremely small. And if all those who combine public spirit with capacity are already occupied, it would be folly for a town to add, let us say, the manufacture of gas to its other functions. In such a case the local authority will get far better terms for the consumers by prudent leasing and by vigilant control than by substituting public mismanagement for private monopoly. Or again—even granted that there is the requisite supply of ability—it may still be wisest to leave the lighting in private hands. For, supposing there to be a strong likelihood that gas will be superseded in the course of the next twenty years, a public body should obviously

pause before sinking a large amount of its clients' capital in so hazardous an investment.

So thorny is the path, and so cautious should be the steps of the intelligent Progressive—the Liberal; so numerous are the practical qualifications which he will admit, even to the dictum that natural monopolies ought to be municipalised. For, in his view, industry is the sphere of voluntary transactions¹ and of individual enterprise. The State will play its proper part in commerce by supervision rather than by participation. It will recognise the importance of discouraging or abolishing *artificial* and of controlling or owning *natural* monopolies.

In another sphere it will recognise that vast

¹ And here we are supported by Aristotle, whose economic ideas should be carefully distinguished from those of the new "Aristotle according to Stewart." For Mr. Stewart's otherwise admirable commentary here and there betrays a strange mania for Stagirisising modern conceptions of the part which a State should play in industry. In the new Aristotle the farmer "receives the reward of his labour in the form of the coat which a settled social system allows him to get in exchange for his corn from the tailor." Aristotle, it will be remembered ("Nicomachean Ethics," Bk. V.), carefully distinguished "Reciprocal" or Commercial justice from both "Distributive" and "Corrective." Mr. Stewart ranges it under "Distributive," and makes Aristotle regard trade as the most important instance of State distribution. The poor old Greek philosopher tried to make himself plain. He viewed a commercial transaction in a simple enough light, *i.e.* as a perfectly voluntary "deal" between two or more voluntary agents exchanging their property. But this will not do. Aristotle, we are to suppose, is trying—obscurely no doubt, but still he is trying—to indicate the great truth that the State is a vast living organism, a mystic, omnipotent Being which distributes wealth to passive but grateful citizen-slaves.

fortunes are the proper objects of a graduated income tax, not only on account of the doubtful methods of gambling finance by which they are hastily accumulated, but also on account of the evils with which when cunningly manipulated they menace the consumer. Some very striking illustrations drawn from the United States of the tendency of vast wealth accumulations to create monopolies are to be found in Sir Henry Wrixon's recently published "*Notes on a Political Tour.*" That astute political observer very properly insists that monopolisation not only results from gigantic fortunes, but is also a means to their accumulation. "Rings, trusts, pools, combinations enable enormous fortunes to be made, but only by the exploitation of the community at large." I cannot refrain from giving two of the many instances quoted by Sir Henry Wrixon. Not that we need go so far afield. Anyone who has bought a novel at a railway bookstall knows from practical experience the effect of monopoly on prices. However, we can hardly parallel a custom like the following :—"A railway company will refuse to let its trains stop at a considerable town on the prairies, and fix its station further on, where it has a grant of land, so as to compel people to begin a new town there and pay what price it thinks proper for the building sites." Another case suggests one, at any rate, of the crying grievances that have made Bryanism :—"The practice was (I was told by those who had practical knowledge)

for the railway companies to compute, as the harvest time came on, the utmost that the farmers or other settlers could possibly afford to give to have their produce carried, to fix their rates accordingly, and leave them the alternative of submitting to it or letting their crops rot upon the ground." Thus, while the foreign trade of the States is hampered and plundered by protective duties a similar taint is spreading at home and blighting their internal trade. Of one monstrous swindle due to an underhand piece of jobbery between plutocrats and a railway monopoly a leading New York paper recently remarked :—" It is by such conspiracy between railroads and favoured capitalists that enormous monopolies are built up to prey on the consumer and to corrupt politics with their ill-gotten money." Facts like these speak for themselves and lend a persuasiveness to the advocates of legalised loot which no amount of "popocrat" rhetoric could otherwise command. It is hardly paradoxical to assert that in the Property Defence League's chamber of horrors a millionaire meditating a monopoly deserves an honoured place beside a Bellamy "looking backwards."

The principle of graduation in the income tax, which tends to check these huge swellings of wealth, is therefore, properly regarded, an encouragement rather than a menace to private property ; it provides security for fair and free competition, and, far from seeking to relieve the ordinary citizen of State burdens,

its chief aim and object are a greater distribution of property and therefore of taxation.

Here, too, there is a limit which Liberals will recognise. This limit admits of statement in general form, and may be said to be reached whenever the scale becomes steep enough to suggest to reasonable and impartial men that further graduation might either decrease the national wealth and well-being by driving capital from the country, or might, to the public detriment, create a corrupt desire among the poorer part of the electorate for an increase of the public expenditure. Than the latter contingency nothing could be more loathsome. Can it be imagined that any responsible politician will ever condescend to provide the employed, the unemployed or the unemployable with an interest in public extravagance? The two attitudes represent the gulf that separates a Hooley from a Bright,¹ or a Keir Hardie from an Adam Smith. That "representation implies taxation" is a principle which might under certain circumstances deserve as much emphasis on Liberal platforms and in the Liberal press as that which is now being laid upon "Taxation implies representation." Each represents an important aspect of

¹ John Bright's public motto was "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." Mr. Hooley has lately taken upon himself to suggest that the working classes should be bribed to support a tax on corn by a promise of Old-Age Pensions. In other words, put a heavy and wasteful tax on the labouring poor, nominally to support the aged poor, really to enrich landed proprietors.

individual liberty. The latter is the fortress against the corrupt legislation now demanded by a strong section of the party in power; the former can fortunately at present only be of service against those who will never be able to appreciate any argument except that of superior force. It need not therefore be further discussed. We shall practically agree with Sir Henry Wrixon's comment on an income tax recently proposed in America. "It is right," he remarks, "to exempt from such a tax the small incomes of the poorer classes; but it must be demoralising to the sense of citizenship and the responsibility that ought to accompany the taxing power for the mass of the people to levy imposts that leave themselves untouched."

On the other hand, "No taxation without representation" is a motto for every-day use. Every class will discover in turn an "intolerable strain" if it can only absorb public money without public control. The feelings of the Voluntary school manager are in nowise abnormal. Every human being who "at charity meetings stands at the door and collects, though he does not subscribe," would welcome relief from the intolerable strain. And the manager merely wants to draw *the whole* of his "voluntary" subscriptions from the public purse. But what are we to say of the party which allows such a demand even to masquerade under the patronage of its leaders? They are, of course, the upholders of the privileges and

vested interests which uphold them; but everyone who desires purity in politics will set himself against these various attempts to exploit the community in the interests of the classes. Privilege, indeed, is the keynote of what is anti-Liberal in political conception. But of all class legislation, that form which defends or extends the diversion of public money to private uses is the most noxious. How much longer will an educated democracy permit the continuance of laws which constantly drive select classes of the community to the polls in support of their direct pecuniary interests?

At any rate, the Liberal policy is clear. It is our duty to oppose each clamorous demand that "a nuisance, a social crime, or a wrong, shall not be extinguished without paying the wrong-doer." But discrimination is all-important. "No compensation" is a very proper spirit in which to approach *false* "vested interests," or, more properly, "vested abuses." But we must remember that there are, on the other hand, genuine vested interests in cases where (to quote a famous Oxford professor of the last generation) a man, or a class of men, "have distinctly done the public a service under an intelligible contract, the payment for which cannot in justice or equity be refused."

The difference between a reformer and a revolutionary is seen in their manner of dealing with real and false distinctions. That almost all distinctions

are in their practical manifestation distinctions of degree is regarded by the shallow sophist as a pretext for ignoring them ; by the philosopher and the statesman as an additional reason for patient investigation, with a view to giving proper allowance in law and administration.

And it may be urged that the Liberal party stands out in almost lonely splendour, in virtue of the combination of ardent advocacy of principle with willingness and even determination to observe the most minute distinctions in application. What historian of our own times has not noticed the chivalrous, sometimes almost Quixotic, justice which Mr. Gladstone has time after time meted out to the beaten advocates of privilege in Church and State? And who will not admit this attitude to be the ideal counterpart of the battle-winning logic of Cobden and the triumphant eloquence of Bright? Not that this attachment to principle which has marked the Liberal party in England is a characteristic which has been entirely wanting to reform movements in other countries. But couple with it a large measure of success ; add to both sympathy, moderation, and equity in the hour of victory ; and it may be said without fear of exaggeration that the world's history will hardly match the record of the English reform party during the last seventy years.

This record, so far as it touches national wealth, has been hinted at in these pages, and here and there

vindicated from some of the gross misconceptions which are now beginning to prevail, as we draw further away from the old Protectionist times. The rise in the standard of comfort among all classes of the community, great and satisfactory in all ranks of life, specially great and specially striking among the labouring classes, has been illustrated at perhaps tedious length from statisticians, the substantial accuracy of whose conclusions no person of repute is likely seriously to challenge. If there has been too much acerbity shown in attacking those who make diametrically opposite statements (especially concerning the past and present condition of the agricultural labourer, the stock-in-trade of their speeches and posters), the writer would desire to confess that he was often at a loss to decide whether it were least objectionable to attribute to great national heroes infantile ignorance or that peculiar fact-twisting partiality which would seem to be almost an hereditary instinct in certain ancient English families. At any rate, a little warmth in controversy with Tory "economists" is scarcely avoidable.

The Socialists have laid themselves open to a not dissimilar reproach. In that movement there are many good elements—in fact, on the purely moral and social side, everyone with genuine sympathy for other classes than his own deserves the title. But in the economic sphere, substituting collectivism for socialism, I can see nothing good in their doctrines that

is not borrowed from Cobden, Mill, Gladstone, Harcourt, and Asquith. Some, however, possess economic grasp of the present, coupled with political vigour and interest in so remarkable a degree, that one is more pleased than surprised to see them turning to present-day Liberalism, and laying up the mediæval barks with which they once thought to revolutionise the carrying trade of the world.

Instead of vituperating Manchesterianism, they are beginning to help in employing to good purpose the popular institutions in whose foundation or improvement the Manchester school played the leading part.

But for that disloyal section, or rather fraction, of the party which has flung away the solid principles of Liberalism, and without comprehending the Diomedean character of the exchange has caught up the tenets, or at any rate the catch-words, of Collectivism—for these opportunists the writer cannot help feeling a contemptuous sympathy. They have exchanged golden armour for armour of brass, armour worth a hundred oxen for armour worth nine. Some will return, some will perforce retire and probably end their lives as Tory voters. For it cannot be too earnestly insisted that the Collectivist Utopia is as vicious on its economical as it is inhuman on its practical side: vicious, for it coolly ignores the proved evils of monopoly and the folly of discouraging invention and enterprise;

inhuman, for it ultimately postulates the non-existence of that love of property which is invoked as the most potent instrument for the overthrow of society. A fine industrial State we may expect from men who are assiduously educating their followers on such principles as the confiscation of property and the repudiation of debts and contracts! The Liberal party is not a party of the poor against the rich, but a national party. It desires the greater prosperity of the community as a whole; and for accomplishing that end it believes in the extension, not the reversal, of the policy which it has initiated. By improved education to abolish the rubbish which is being produced and distributed for food and clothing, by amending the laws to foster a fresh race of yeomen, by encouraging co-operation to smooth away the antithesis between labour and capital, and by reducing the vast mob of middlemen who now prey upon the consumer to enrich both capitalist labourer and labouring capitalist—these are some of the possible lines of future progress. But individual freedom and national prosperity would be as incompatible with Collectivism and State monopoly as they once proved to be with Protectionism and class monopoly. On the other hand, the advancement of the just claims of the labouring classes, the improvement of their material condition, their elevation socially, morally, and intellectually, are not chimerical or illusive catch-

words in the party programme. These ideas are embedded in Liberal principles, they grow and flourish on Liberal soil, and their fruit may now be seen in the solid and substantial benefits conferred by half a century of Liberal influence.

FRANCIS W. HIRST.

LIBERALS AND LABOUR.

The Threatened Divorce of Labour from Liberalism—The Socialistic Attitude towards the Liberal Tradition—The Liberal Attitude towards Socialistic Proposals—Need of a more Definite Standpoint for our Industrial Policy—Effects of this Want of Definiteness on the New Progressive and on the Old Whig—Liberal Unity threatened by Increasing Specialisation in Politics—Dangers of Programme-Making—Attention to Abstract Principles need not divert Liberal Energies from Concrete Reforms—The Lesson of the Local Veto Bill—The Real Principles of Temperance Reform—Liberalism as the Party of Ideas—Two Ideal Forces at work in Liberal Policy: (i.) The Idea of Individuality freed from Legislative Regulation; (ii.) The Idea of Individuality as guaranteed by State Control—The Liberal Paradox in Industrial Politics: Legislative Interference encouraged by the Champions of Individual Freedom—Liberals and Socialists may agree in supporting a Policy, but never in the Ultimate Reasons for supporting it—How State Interference promotes Liberty of Choice—The Statutory Regulation of Industry is not inconsistent with Active Competition, for it merely records Preliminary Conditions attached to the Contract between Master and Workman—Labour Legislation may be criticised from Two Points of View, Moral and Economic—The Advantage of separating these Two Aspects in Discussion—The Ethical Aspect of Industrial Regulation—Ultimate Opposition between Socialistic and Liberal Positions—What is the Liberal Attitude towards Industrial Questions?—Although in one sense a Compromise, it is still determined by the Consistent Application of an Idea—Employers' Liability Bill, 1893-4, illustrates this: (a) No "Common Employment," (b) No "Contracting Out"—The True Principles of Industrial Legislation and their Application—Liberal *versus* Socialist in Working Men's Questions—And Liberal *versus* Tory.

THE title of this essay is one which has long since lost all claim to novelty; its alliteration has been used by "Labour" leaders to point a contrast and adorn a brand new programme, and by "Liberal"

worthies to plead a natural affinity and to recommend a renewed alliance. For, serious as is the present position of the Liberal party when regarded as in opposition to forces avowedly un-liberal in tradition and patently illiberal in policy, the difficulties which meet it from without are insignificant by the side of the dangers which threaten it from the foes of its own household. These dangers are aggravated by the spirit in which they are raised and by the spirit in which they are met. On the one hand, the prophets of the New Labour, though they are willing enough to claim that the mantle of Liberalism has fallen on their own shoulders, appear to be particularly anxious to repudiate the inspiration and the authority—nay, even to doubt the honesty—of previous wearers of that garment. That it has been the glory of Liberalism in the past to vindicate the claims of the individual against all vested interest and all monopoly, is a truth which is either denied or ignored by those who are now claiming to monopolise sympathy with the workers, and who would fain create for themselves a vested interest in the purer emotions. How characteristic of the extreme section of the Labour party such a claim is will be apparent from reflecting on the use that is made by the more ignorant Socialists of such a phrase as “the Manchester school”—a phrase which no longer calls up memories of the struggle for cheap food and Parliamentary representation for

the poor, but which is fast taking a place among the meaningless expletives affected by a part of the population in moments when the precise signification of abusive words is of little consequence. This unreasoning hostility to the record, to the very name, of Liberalism—a hostility displayed and encouraged by some of the men who owe most to the success of that party in vindicating the rights of free speech and free combination—is, as has been said, an aggravation of the difficulties which surround the Liberal policy for Labour ; but in itself the circumstance does not call for prolonged discussion, least of all does it justify insinuations of dishonest and selfish motive suggested by those whose honesty and disinterestedness in the past have often suffered under unfounded suspicions. Singleness of purpose, genuineness of emotion, are no less clearly traceable in the policy of the New Labour party than ingratitude towards, and ignorance of, the achievements of older Liberalism ; and there is no need to discuss the question whether, in public affairs, attacks of palpitation of the heart afford a complete excuse for actions which suggest a tendency toward softening in the head.

The attitude of “ Labour ” (to give the new movement its self-chosen title) to Liberalism would thus be of slight importance save for the changing attitude of Liberalism to Labour (using the word in its wider and more natural connotation). It is characteristic

of a Liberal party that its members look with indulgence and sympathy on any revolt which claims to represent a progressive force. And the influence of the Socialist movement would be much less than it is were it not that its original effect has in its turn become a new cause, producing results which depend for their significance on the vague and ill-regulated sympathies of many avowed and enthusiastic Liberals. The reason for this want of definiteness in the position taken up by Liberals on Labour questions is not far to seek. The record of our party in dealing with those problems in which the workers are most immediately concerned has been in the past a history of conflict against compact forces of greatly superior power in the interests of oppressed, disorganised, and down-trodden units. So long as the employer is in a position of vastly preponderating influence, the message of Liberalism is not misrepresented—rather, it is given special point and directness—if it is put in a form which suggests that the interests of the worker are the chief, or even the sole, concern of the party. But it is well to remember that a time may come when the very success of this policy may make it necessary to change the form of its expression. The need for such emendation is not, perhaps, pressing as yet; but it is even now important to emphasise the truth that it is only so long as the balance is seriously uneven that the weight of Liberalism can be rightly flung exclusively in the

lighter scale. To employ a mathematical metaphor, it is only so long as the forces of capitalism are infinite, in comparison with the forces of labour, that the claims of capitalism can be justly neglected as infinitesimal in comparison with the claims of labour. In theory, this application of the inverse ratio is recognised by every Liberal who speaks of "equality of opportunity" as the watchword of his party; but in practice the truth has been obscured through the circumstance that inequalities have in the past invariably been to the advantage of one class, and opportunities have been invariably equalised by urging the claims of the other. Hence the problem of the *limits* to the rights of labour has not as yet appeared to Liberals to possess more than a theoretic interest. In opposing an immovable mass, as the schoolmen remind us, it is never excessive to employ an irresistible force; and many earnest Liberals have no better touchstone at which to test the proposals of the new "labour movement" than a vague sentiment, which is ready to identify with Liberalism any proposal, however illiberal, any claim, however preposterous, if only it is alleged to be put forward in the interests of the working man.

In Labour questions, then, Liberals are face to face with new problems and with new remedies, and their attitude towards them is often wavering and uncertain. The present social policy of the party is ill-defined and ill-supported, and it is so because it is not, as

heretofore, directed by the clear and deliberate application of Liberal principles to existing conditions—a method which in the past gave dignity, unity and success to the cause, and which would, were it resolutely pursued, inevitably do so again. Instead of this, Liberals have often approached recent proposals in an opportunist spirit, without grasping or applying any principle calculated to show which should be taken and which should be left.

The result could have been easily foreseen. The emotional Liberal, remembering the glorious traditions of his party, and carried away by a sympathy which is as indispensable for the noble inspiration of a policy as it is inadequate for the prudent determination of its content, is ready to recognise the features of the old Liberalism in every misshapen offspring fathered upon it by the new. And the cool-headed Liberal fares no better: in avoiding the exuberant emotions of the latter-day Socialist he contents himself with the sterile formulæ of the antiquated Whig. He denounces every attempt to ameliorate by law the conditions of labour as tyrannical interference with the independence of working men, and blindly resists every proposal that can be miscalled Socialistic without any examination into its real purpose and effects. But a party of progress is betrayed no less by the stolidity of the Smug than by the flightiness of the Sentimentalist.

Neither of these classes of Liberals is altogether

without a hold upon the great principles of the party, but the point of view is in each case so limited, that the application of these principles is often distorted. As a consequence of this, the great name of Liberal—"one of the most beautiful words in the English language," as Lord Rosebery said—runs the risk of losing much of its traditional dignity. For, as always happens in such cases, the anti-Liberal critic concentrates his gaze upon that side of Liberalism which is furthest removed from himself. While capitalists and landowners are denouncing the late Government as revolutionary, Mr. Keir Hardie points to the unsolved problem of the unemployed, and never remembers Mr. Asquith's Factory Act, the Railway Servants' Hours Act (which in the first eighteen months of its working brought some 10,000 unemployed into railway labour), or the adoption of an eight hours day in Government workshops and factories (by which more than 30,000 workmen were affected). It is not enough to answer each critic in turn by pointing to the indignation of his rival. A general who is assailed on both sides cannot derive much comfort from the reflection that, however strenuous be the attack from one quarter, his army will be forced to maintain its ground by an equally vigorous assault from the other; and although mathematicians tell us that a body, upon which two equal and opposite forces are acting, remains in a state of rest, it is plain that the internal constitution of the

body is liable to serious strain in the process. What is, above all, needed is a more comprehensive grasp of the basis of Liberal policy, both in order to justify the details of its development, and in order to establish the interconnection of its several parts. The increasing complexity of civic life and the consequently increasing subdivision of political interests has left many Liberals ignorant and careless of the broader aspects of their faith. It is easy for each of us to see how his own political hobby is a rigid application of Liberal theory, even if that theory be but vaguely comprehended ; but it is difficult to appreciate the justice and importance of applications on which others lay chief stress. And thus we have the unedifying sight of tectotal Liberals negligent of everything but Temperance reform ; of a champion of undenominational education hinting repudiation of Home Rule, because, forsooth, certain Irishmen are willing to get what they can for Catholic schools ; and of a Scottish member retiring in high dudgeon to the Highland hills because the Government which he was elected to support cannot give the crofters a chief place in its programme !

To this plea for a more philosophic view of the details of a Liberal programme—a view which, if it does not embrace “all time and all existence,” at any rate leaves each burning question in its true setting amidst larger issues—it may be objected that concentration is the key to success, in politics as in other

branches of human energy. "One thing at a time" is the motto of the organiser of parties no less than of the general of armies; and the history of political, no less than of military, campaigns proves the importance of the application of an undivided force at the same moment, at the same spot. Were the question one of tactics, such a criticism would not be out of place (and, indeed, it expresses a truth which not only guides to victory, but also, save the mark! explains defeat). But the real question is not one of tactics; it is useless to ask in what shape Liberal policy may be most attractively presented to the world at large until we have fully grasped the ideas which it is to express. In political, no less than in moral, life there is a categorical imperative—the rule to act from principle. An instance will show both the necessity of concentrating upon these foundations of Liberalism, and the slightness of the attention which is often paid to them. The Local Veto Bill of the late Government is, rightly or wrongly, regarded as largely responsible for the present Tory majority. If it be so, the blame does not rest with the Bill itself, but with the mistaken view taken of its leading principles. Had the Bill been what its opponents were allowed (too often, alas! without meeting with vigorous correction) to describe it to be, its unpopularity was natural enough. Why did not Liberals, instead of preserving a silence in itself suspicious, or giving a perfunctory denial to ludicrous misstatements, every-

where emphasise the ideas on which the Bill was based? If it had once been made clear that Local Veto was no new thing, but had long been exercised by magistrates and landlords, what would have become of the contention that it was the new-fangled creation of a revolutionary party? Liberals had illustrations for their argument ready to hand: in every constituency there was some magistrate's house with no beershop in vulgar proximity, and in many some estate upon which the landlord permitted no public-house to be built; once it was known that the Bill proposed to transfer the power of regulating the position and number of public-houses from magistrates and landlords to the general public, and to those who have the best reason for knowing their usefulness and their danger, how could it have been maintained that the "poor man" was in peril of being "robbed of his beer"? And when it was seen that Sir William Harcourt's legislation would have secured the control of a monopoly by the whole locality for the benefit of which it is permitted to exist, who could have dared to declare it "a conspiracy of a few miserable temperance fanatics"? If the democratic tendencies of the measure had been more fully realised, Tories could not have posed as popular champions in resisting it, and the appeal to the love of beer, so pitifully repeated by the champions of culture and religion, would have been as unsuccessful as it was irrelevant and disgusting.

The above example shows that it ought to be much more than a cant phrase to say that the Liberal party is the party of principle. In making such a claim we are not flattering ourselves by abusing our opponents; we are merely noting the fact that the realisation of an idea, by and for itself, occupies a place in the mind of Liberals which of necessity it cannot fill in tempers of another political mould. Such an attitude has its special difficulties, as well as its unique compensations. The reason why the politics of Labour are threatening to raise divisions in the Liberal party is precisely because two ideas—each vigorously, if vaguely, held—are exerting two divergent forces upon the Liberal mass. The precise magnitude—even the precise direction—of each of these ideal forces is a matter of dispute; those who claim to the clearest grasp of the facts of the one, are often the most confused in their accounts of the other; the extremists on either side go so far as to deny the existence of the other influence altogether; and the resultant activity of the Liberal whole is neither homogeneous nor regular. It is important, therefore, justly to estimate these two tendencies—to examine their nature, their force, their direction—in order that the Liberal policy for Labour may be seen to have a better justification than hand-to-mouth expediency, and may take its place as a reasoned product of the party of principles.

The first of these tendencies may be represented

by the idea of securing individual freedom through the removal of restrictions—of the value to the citizen of free development as a factor in well-being—of the evil, both to the character of the unit and to the welfare of the whole body-politic, of every limitation set by law upon personal judgment and choice. The abolition of commercial protection and the removal of religious tests were not merely the relief of one part of the population from oppressive treatment imposed by the blindness or bigotry of a special interest or creed; they were expressions of the abstract principle (quite apart from consideration of special material grievances) that the end of politics is, in general, best attained by a minimum of legislative regulation. From commerce and religion philosophic Liberalism passes to labour. The restrictions under which manual toil was carried on were rather “stepmotherly” than “grandmotherly.” The workman’s life—his occupation, his hours, his wages—was controlled by an agency which left his own interests not merely unrepresented but actually unregarded. In the early part of the century the old system of industrial regulation had lapsed into desuetude so far as it attempted to control the action of employers, but survived in vigorous enactments for restricting the freedom of wage-earners. For ten years after Waterloo the old method of extracting a standard wage from the masters was entirely obsolete, while the right of uniting and jointly demanding better

terms was still resolutely denied to the men. The repeal of the laws against workmen's combination for obtaining better conditions and improved pay for their work, the establishment of the right to emigrate, the extension of freedom of contract—all such changes were nothing but expressions of the idea that unrestricted free-play was all that every citizen required to attain his just position in the community. Mill crystallised the principle in a treatise which, once for all, vindicated the importance of individuality against the blessings of State-regulated existence, and declared the full expression of personal character to be "one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress."¹

Side by side with this idea of individuality as secure *from* legislative interference there has grown up, in apparent contradiction, the idea of individuality as secured *by* legislative interference. Without entering upon those speculations concerning the metaphysics of free will with which Mr. Balfour is wont to dilute the discussion of Irish whisky, it is apparent that the mere abolition of restrictions will not leave the individual artisan master of his destiny. If our object is to secure for every man the maximum of free development, it is not to be attained by leaving each labouring unit at the mercy of the huge industrial system which surrounds him. "The answer of

¹ On "Liberty," chap. iii.

modern statesmanship is, that unfettered individual competition is not a principle to which the regulation of industry may be entrusted. There may be conditions which it is in the highest degree desirable to impose on industry, and to which the general opinion of the industrial classes may be entirely favourable. Yet the assistance of law may be needed to give effect to this opinion, because—in the words of the great man who was now (1844) preparing the exposition of political economy which was to reign all through the next generation—only law can afford to every individual a guarantee that his competitors will pursue the same course as to hours of labour and so forth, without which he cannot safely adopt it himself.”¹ Thus we are confronted by the seeming paradox that the party which sets the highest store upon untrammelled individuality, has yet been the most eager to call in the authority of Parliament for the regulation of the conditions of industry. Neither the result itself, nor the part played by Liberalism in producing it, can either be denied or regretted by any present-day Liberal. Instead of the Elizabethan code regulating industrial employment, the last fragments of which disappeared in the early years of the century, the last half-century has seen the gradual evolution of an elaborate regulative code for the protection of labour. Not merely children

¹ Morley's "Cobden," chap. xiii. The quotation referred to will be found in Mill's "Political Economy," bk. v., chap. xi., § 12.

and women-workers, but even adult men find their daily occupations in factory and workshop, mine and warehouse, circumscribed by State-made conditions, interpreted by Government departments and enforced in detail by official inspectors. The vigorous and compulsory intervention of the law between employer and employed—an intervention for which Liberal influences, both in legislation and in administration, have been chiefly responsible—has now proceeded to such lengths that “we find,” as Mr. Morley says, “the rather amazing result that in the country where Socialism has been less talked about than any other country in Europe, its principles have been most extensively applied.”

On this claim of “Socialism” to regard as so many applications of “its principles” every interference of Parliament with the conditions of labour, there is much that might be said. The word “Socialism” is itself fast losing all claim to be an instrument of value in political investigation; it is meeting the fate which awaits most popular abstractions—the more familiar it becomes as a phrase, the less definite it grows as an idea. It is true, no doubt, that in the sphere of Labour legislation there is a large field where State interference is approved alike by the scientific Socialist and by the Liberal who retains to the full a belief in the old principles of his party. But this coincidence is no more than a casual agreement, and it is entirely gratuitous to assume

that reforms which both schools of theorists are agreed to welcome can be justified only from the Socialistic point of view. To the Socialist (who appears hardly to recognise any qualitative difference between the municipalisation of a natural monopoly and of an ordinary competitive trade) every regulation controlling the conditions under which the artisan competes for his wage is a step towards the abolition of competition; to the Liberal, on the contrary, it is a step towards the adjustment of surroundings without which competition is but a mockery. The individualist does not renounce his faith in individuality because he is ready to abolish "contracting-out," and because he desires stringent factory inspection; he still believes in the all-importance to the workman of free choice, and sees in the statutory regulation of industry only an attempt to secure to manual workers something better than a free choice between employment under improper conditions and no employment at all. When, for instance, Mr. Balfour defends, in the name of individual liberty, an arrangement which permits employ  s, in return for some form of consideration, to forego their title to compensation from the employer in whose service they may be injured, he not only ignores the repeated and unanimous desires of the men, as expressed by their own organisations, but he entirely misses the point of Mr. Asquith's Bill. It is precisely because no individual liberty is, as a matter of fact, left to the

workman under the existing law, that a new one is imperatively demanded. "The trade unionists assert"—we have it on an authority which, for combined enthusiasm and knowledge, is without a rival in this country—"that the workman's consent to forego his legal claim is given practically under duress, since a man applying for employment has no free option whether or not he will join the firm's benefit society, and so relieve his employer from that pecuniary inducement to guard against accidents which the Act was intended to afford." ¹

While, however, the Liberal may join hands with the Socialist in securing certain definite applications of legal restriction in the sphere of industry, he cannot act from the same motives and with the same ideals in view. Even when aiming at the same change in the law, the object to be attained is widely different. Face to face with the undisputed fact that real freedom of choice may be denied to the individual workman while it is enjoyed by the capitalist employer, the Liberal aims at redressing the balance by some very different means than the desperate method of annihilating freedom of choice altogether. The proper regulation of industry by law is only an extension of the principle of collective bargaining: just as a trades-union may maintain a minimum rate of wages by associating all its members in one com-

¹ Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, in the *Progressive Review*, Jan., 1897, p. 345.

bined demand, so the law of the land may lay down an inferior limit for conditions of employment, in the name of a whole class of workers, which every separate unit is anxious to secure, but which cannot be established at all without being guaranteed to everyone alike. Liberal principle is not sacrificed by the adoption of enactments which add the emphasis of law to the reasonable demands of the weaker citizens in their dealings with the stronger. State interference in such cases does not limit the reality of free choice ; it confirms the workman's claim to be heard in the striking of a bargain where he would otherwise negotiate at an unjust advantage. From this point of view law is expressive, not impressive : it records, in a form that cannot be disregarded, certain of the stipulations of a contracting party in the industrial compact, but it does not at all attempt to import into the bargain conditions which limit freedom of choice in directions in which it can be reasonably exercised. While retaining his hold on the idea of individuality, as secure from external restraints, the Liberal admits the interaction of character and environment, and does not hesitate to give up some psychological shadow of freedom for its material reality. In optics, what is lost in area illuminated may be gained in intensity of illumination ; and in politics, what is lost in the theoretic field for exercising free choice is sometimes gained in the concentrated power of realising what is chosen.

The object of the preceding pages has been to make some examination into the ideas which should inspire Liberals in dealing with "labour" problems,—with those questions which touch most directly the daily lives and occupations of working men. This examination has been conducted rather from an ethical than from an economic standpoint, rather with a view to investigating the effects of industrial regulation upon character than upon wealth. These twin aspects of social development cannot, of course, ever be really isolated; every variation in environment has its hidden counterpart in mental disposition, as surely as the passage of electric currents in a helix of wire affects the molecular constitution of the iron bar within it. But subjective and objective change, though they never occur save as closely associated phenomena, may well be dissociated in discussion, and with all the greater advantage, because the double point of view has not always been justly appreciated by Collectivists. It may be easy and attractive to devise plans for a wholesale revolution in the conditions of employment; it may be no less attractive to attempt a defence of such a revolution by some paradox in economics; but it is a thankless and painful task to estimate, step by step, the subtle changes in individual character which might be expected to accompany these external upheavals. Signs, indeed, are not wanting that a few thoughtful Socialists

are realising the danger of devoting to the machinery of life an enthusiastic attention which is denied to its spirit. But this danger, though dimly apprehended by some of the intellectual leaders of Socialism, is not satisfactorily met by them—and, indeed, it cannot be met at all, so long as the communistic hypothesis is maintained. Meanwhile the mass of Socialistic opinion in this country is absolutely ignorant of the fact that any such danger is inherent in their schemes, and Mr. Keir Hardie cheerfully proclaims a policy of universal nationalisation without being troubled with any misgivings as to the effects of the abolition of competition upon the *inner* life of the workers.

With the economic aspect of competition, let us repeat, the present essay has nothing to do. It is concerned with that side of social questions which is none the less important because it is difficult accurately to grasp, which does not lend itself to statistical treatment, and which cannot be reduced to a question of profit and loss; but which, nevertheless, is so subtly intertwined with the roots of social life that Socialists are misled into ignoring its significance altogether. It is in their appreciation of this “ethical” aspect of social problems and remedies that true Liberals and ordinary Socialists stand absolutely opposed. To the former, civic individuality is so important a factor in well-being that the interference of the State is only tolerable

where it promotes real freedom of choice by substituting legal restriction for the harsher tyranny of unequal circumstance ; to the latter, the free play of private wills is to be swamped in a Utopia where all forms of competition are in themselves an evil, and a complete system of State regulation is elevated to the position of an absolute good. Between these two standpoints there is a great gulf fixed ; if we abandon the loose language of common enthusiasms and seek for principles instead of catch-words, we shall find that ultimately there is nothing in common between the Socialistic and Liberal idea. This is an unpleasant truth which neither party has thoroughly grasped—a truth which always tends to be obscured by a common recognition of the injustice of unrestricted competition, and by a common belief in the efficacy of certain legislative remedies. The Socialist, who mistakes identity of treatment for identity of diagnosis, may find it difficult to understand why a principle which promotes the stringent inspection of all workshops will not countenance the public ownership and management of all workshops ; to him these two proposals are two parallel applications of a single idea, and he convicts the Liberal who discriminates between them of a want of courage to carry out to a logical end the principle underlying the Factory Acts. Such a condemnation entirely misses the spirit of industrial legislation, as it is understood by Liberals ;

and amid such suspicions of unworthy compromise it is more than ever necessary to remove from our policy the taint of opportunism, and to make it clear that our principles not only justify certain advances in industrial reform, but also provide a definite limit to its direction and scope.

Now, the Liberal attitude to working men's questions is determined, as has already been said, by a reference to two main ideas—to the idea of freedom as secured by the absence of legal restraint upon one's own private choice, and to the idea of freedom as secured by the imposition of legal restraint upon others, or rather upon the community at large, in one's own private interest. In so far as a truly wise policy lies intermediate between these two extremes, we may call the Liberal attitude one of compromise, and we may admit that every case for State interference must be decided on its individual merits. But this is not to say that the Liberal must roam at large between these two fixed boundaries without any materials for guidance better than the exigencies of the moment. His object is not merely to pick the path of least resistance between the impassable heights of Individualism on the one hand, and the treacherous quagmires of Socialism on the other. At the very moment when he appears to be abandoning ideals in a compromise between opposing tendencies, he is really applying to the solution of concrete difficulties a higher principle which gives dignity to compromise,

and unites tendencies seemingly opposed in the direction of a common end. We may apply to politics what Aristotle says of ethics, that, regarded according to the definition of its nature, virtue is a middle state, but viewed in its relation to what is best and right, it is the extreme of perfection. In other words, the two ideas which we have found to lie at the base of the Liberal view of industrial questions are not really opposed ; they are not divergent ideals which the practical politician must equally renounce when he deserts speculation for electioneering, and uses his Principles (with a big P) in the manufacture not of a policy but of a peroration. Even the details of a sound programme must have a strictly theoretic justification ; and it is only by retaining a grasp on the theory that the practice of politics can be elevated from the meanest of trades to the noblest of public activities.

An illustration suggested by contemporary politics will make this more clear. The recent history of employers' liability will show at once the twin tendencies which are to be traced in all Liberal reform, and the unifying principle which reconciles an apparent opposition of ideals. Mr. Asquith's Bill consisted essentially of two points : it proposed, in the first place, to abolish the doctrine of common employment ; and in the second place, to prohibit all agreements between masters and workmen to "contract out" of the provisions of the law. Here are

two reforms, each urgently demanded by working men, and each fully included in the scope of one Government Bill. Yet the first proposal asserts a principle which *seems* expressly denied by the second. In declaring the fiction of "common employment" to be no longer recognised by law, we are removing a pettifogging restriction which limits the individual rights of the artisan; we are asserting his claim to such treatment at the hands of his employer as is the due of every other citizen who crosses his path; we are securing to the mill-hand that compensation for injury to which he would always have been entitled if he had not happened to be in receipt of wages from the mill-owner in whose service he has been maimed; we are abolishing that parody of equity by which the workman, injured in the actual performance of his daily occupation, may be denied the damages conceded to the chance passer-by. Such a reform in the law is an obvious application of the principle that the relations of master and employé shall not be controlled by exceptional legislation; it puts the workman in the position already occupied by the rest of the world with regard to the employer's liability for accidents caused by any of his servants, and delivers him from the ill-judged interference of the State in his dealings with the holders of capital.

But the refusal to recognise an undertaking given by a workman to forego his rights to compensation for injury, in return for some consideration, appears

to embody a very different principle. At first sight, it looks as if Mr. Asquith's Bill, while restoring to the artisan his rights as an ordinary free citizen by abolishing "common employment," is depriving him of his newly secured status by abolishing "contracting out." The reasons which unite Liberal opinion in support of the seeming paradox have been already indicated. No "Tory democrat" who helped (in the interests, forsooth, of the very workmen whose organisations he abused and whose wishes he ignored!) to destroy Mr. Asquith's Bill has ever attempted to deny that many thousands of workmen have been compelled to contract out of the Act through fear of losing their employment, and that tens of thousands have had to surrender their own choice on finding that such an understanding is an invariable condition of engagement.

To speak of the "sacred right of free contract" under such unequal circumstances is, as Mr. Asquith said, a "pure and unadulterated imposture," and neither Mr. Balfour's ingenuity nor the House of Lords' obstinacy can persuade working men that the boon of contracting out is anything better than the sham which a long series of Trades Union Congresses have declared it to be. Thus the limitation of the common-law right of contract is necessary to secure to the workman the full benefits of the common-law right of compensation for injury. The two parts of Mr. Asquith's Bill involve no contradiction; they may appear to be applications

of different, even of contradictory, principles, and yet behind both lies a single simple idea. Alike in the abolition of "common employment" and in the abolition of "contracting out" we have the same object in view—to relieve the workman from the disabilities of his surroundings, legal and material; to expose the heartless cant which would represent the employer as a purchaser of lives and limbs as well as of labour, and the employé as a "free agent" when he is only free to choose between submission and starvation; in a word, to vindicate the right of every artisan to live as a citizen—not to exist as a machine—in the enjoyment of that self-respect and self-reliance which can only be secured by immunity from the restrictions alike of unequal conditions and of inequitable law.¹

Thus the fundamental idea at the base of all wise industrial legislation becomes clear. It is not loss of principle, it is not love of paradox, that has induced the wiser school of individualist Liberals

¹ The present state of the law was explained with characteristic clearness by Mr. Asquith at Dewsbury, on January 8, 1897:—"If a third person who is not in my employ is injured by the negligent act of any servant of mine, I am held responsible to the uttermost farthing of the damages he may sustain; but if the injured person happens to be a working man in my employment, although I might be supposed to be under some obligation to take special care of his safety . . . he cannot recover a single halfpenny." Mr. and Mrs. Webb have pointed out that the case upon which this view of the law is based (*Priestley v. Fowler*, 1837) is now considered by some eminent authorities to have been wrongly decided.

to put forward proposals for extensive State interference with some of the conditions of labour. The true Liberal has never denied that under our modern system of industry the wage-earning unit will be unequally matched in his struggle with the huge forces of capitalism, until the community throws itself on the side of the weaker combatant. But to admit this is not to denounce industrial competition; it is only to insist that the conditions of such competition, wherever prejudiced by serious inequalities of wealth or influence, shall first be equalised by Parliamentary action. Factory Acts and Employers' Liability Acts do not indicate any surrender of the old principles of individual liberty; they only express the truth that when immunity from State control does not (and it often does not) really secure unrestricted choice, it is better for restraint to be exercised by the community at large in the public interest, than by the predominant class in its own private interest. Legislative interference with industrial conditions is, as it were, a homœopathic remedy, applied with the ultimate object of correcting the baneful influence of external coercion which it seems itself to embody. On the possibility of free choice the workman's self-respect is based. True, but that free choice is not to be secured by isolation amid hostile surroundings in an anarchic community; to be worth having, free choice must be translated into power to effect our choice; and in industrial no less

than moral life, by means of the law we shall become free.

It is no part of the design of this essay to draw out a detailed programme of industrial reform in accordance with the ideas on which emphasis has been laid. We are here concerned only with the *logic* of Labour legislation: we are advocating a *method* in politics which in these latter days has been neither effectively preached nor earnestly practised. Our main object has been to insist that it is still possible to deduce a wise industrial policy, suited to present and future needs, from general principles; what is essential is that these principles should be firmly grasped and consistently applied. Of the nature of these principles much has already been said: they are not in themselves new, but they are capable of wide and novel application to present-day conditions. A true Liberal still holds "that Parliament ought not to legislate on matters on which the people are, or reasonably ought to be, able to protect themselves. It ought not to enact what people shall do or shall not do in respect to self-regarding matters on which the people can fairly decide for themselves. In respect to social reforms and domestic concerns, the duty of Parliament is to interfere as little as possible, and only for the purpose of protecting health, life, or property, and preventing acts which are in the nature of crimes. Parliament should do nothing to lessen that spirit of self-reliance which

makes society progressive wherever it prevails.”¹ These are wise words: the pity is that their proper application is so often misconceived. What wonder is it that embittered and ignorant artisans denounce the older Liberalism, when they hear its principles falsely invoked by harsh employers in defence of a selfish disregard of the duties of capital and of the hardships of labour? And yet, rightly interpreted and honestly applied, these same principles are still potent to inspire and to justify a great industrial charter.

“What, then,” the Socialist may be supposed to inquire, “is the prospect which these principles hold out to the labouring classes?” No complete answer can be attempted here: it will be enough to indicate, positively and negatively, in merest outline, the path which the heirs of the Liberal tradition should pursue. Recognising the danger of serious inequalities in the distribution of wealth, they will boldly discriminate between the taxable abundance of the rich and the irreducible minimum of the poor; but they will not check the stimulus to thrift by penalising the legitimate success which its exercise has achieved. Holding that environment and character are closely intertwined, they will invoke the aid of law to secure better conditions for industry; but they will not imagine that factory inspection can make the unemployable efficient, or shorter hours make the idle industrious. Admitting the inability of a wage-

¹ Charles Bradlaugh's “Labour and Law,” p. 31.

earner to maintain unassisted his just claims in his dealings with a wealthy paymaster, they will bring the influence of the community to the aid of the weaker party; but they will not purchase complete independence from the control of individuals at the price of complete dependence on the dictation of the State. Believing that all free men should be equal in the control of their own lives no less than in the eye of the law, they will promote opportunities for individual choice by statutory restrictions upon the forces that oppose it; but they will refuse to regard as their ideal a society where all will be equally free because all will be equally enslaved.

"But," the Tory may object, in his turn, "why claim a policy of steady and continuous industrial reform as the exclusive possession of the Liberal party? Has not Mr. Chamberlain a social programme? Is not Mr. Balfour a champion of Tory democracy? Are not you arrogating to yourself a sympathy with the worker and a desire to improve his lot which every honest man, be he Liberal or be he Conservative, has equally at heart?" To such a criticism it is difficult to reply without the appearance of arrogance. Let us make a member of the present Tory Cabinet the scapegoat. "Can we forget," said the present Duke of Devonshire in 1885, "what is the composition of the Conservative party? Is it reasonable to suppose that the Conservative squires, by whose support the Tory party so largely exists,

really desire any radical and complete alteration in the Land Laws? Do they really desire legislation which is aimed at the breaking-up of those estates which it has hitherto been their pride to possess and to transmit from father to son, even if their families have become too impoverished to do justice to them? Are we really to believe that the landlord and the clergyman anxiously and sincerely desire to divest themselves of the power which they now exercise over the affairs of the country and the parish, and to hand it over to the selected representatives of the people? Are we to believe that the publican interest, to which the Conservative party has hitherto owed so much, is really anxious that the power of granting licences and of dealing with licences should be transferred from benches of magistrates to locally elected boards? I must admit that I find it somewhat hard to believe these things, and I believe that whatever may be the promises which Conservative statesmen may make with the object of gaining power, whatever may be their sincere conviction as to what ought to be done on these subjects, they will find great and insuperable difficulties, considering the men and the material of which their party is composed, in applying any adequate and complete solution to those difficulties which they themselves see.”¹

Lord Hartington has changed more than his title. “Can we forget?” he asked a dozen years ago: and

¹ Lord Hartington at Rawtenstall, October 10, 1885.

the Duke of Devonshire has already forgotten. Unionism, it would seem, is the greatest of political virtues, for it covereth a multitude of sins. But this analysis of the essential shortcomings of Toryism has survived the recantation of its author. Inherent in the very constitution of the party lie the seeds of its weakness. What is true of its attitude towards the land, towards the Church, and towards the public-house, is doubly true of its attitude towards industrial questions. "Is it reasonable to suppose"—we may adopt the Duke of Devonshire's phrase—that the young bloods who attacked the Board of Trade for desiring to arbitrate in the Penrhyn quarries' dispute, can fairly estimate the justice of the claims of working men? "Are we really to believe" that Lord Salisbury is willing and able to meet the fair demands of labour, when he denounces trades unions as "cruel organisations"? "Are we to believe" that workmen will obtain better security for life and limb from a party which puts the wishes of the North-Western Railway directors before the repeated desires of workers throughout the country?

It is needless to multiply illustrations. A party which is identified with limited material interests, which adopts the standards of one prosperous class as its own, which represents the established order as the ideal order, and confuses the conventional with the normal, is necessarily prevented from grasping and developing an ideal policy for the industrial classes.

It remains for Liberals, who have no special clients to serve and no special privileges to protect, to formulate and carry out wise social reforms, which shall be as far removed from the spasmodic concessions of Tories on the one hand, as from the stereotyped officialdom of Socialists on the other.

J. ALLSEBROOK SIMON.

LIBERALISM IN OUTWARD RELATIONS.

- I. Prevailing habit of English Character—Applied to General Politics—And more definitely to Foreign Tradition : (1) of abstaining from Criticism ; (2) of Mechanical Continuity—The Remedy—To evoke Public Feeling ? —Armenian Agitation no true example—Crete compared—Fear of such Control a Tory motive—The Midlothian Campaign gives the Answer. II. National Morality—Two Postulates—Honour a motive of the State—The Jingo considered—(A reservation)—Analysed as a false expression of sound motives in the State—Illustration from the Individual—Late general reaction in this matter as elsewhere. III. Why are we unpopular in Europe ?—Egypt—Foreign Suspicion of England someway justified—Italy—Pan-Anglican Empire—The Empire as it is—Federation a welcome codifying of confused relations—What is the Principle to guide Liberals in these Questions ?—Nationalism—Applied to Colonies—To Ireland—Further extended to Transvaal—A caution against misconstruction—Militarism of this Essay defended and specified—Legitimate spheres of War and Arbitration—England and U.S.A.—Democratic Control makes for genuine Continuity—France. IV. Party in Foreign Affairs : Has it any place ? —Should Liberal Foreign Policy differ in direction as well as execution ?—A modified Yes—How to elicit a Party direction—France again—Party sympathies an initiative—Party antipathies not by themselves determining till reinforced by national grudge—Germany—Italy—Dynastic influences dismissed. V. General Resuming Summary : Faults not coterminous with Liberalism—Political Shibboleths—Clear thinking and popular explanation—Feeling to be evoked—And directed—Jingoism and the other extreme—How we err—Democracy realised in Foreign Affairs—Its Aims suggested—Conclusion.

CERTAIN English characteristics may be traced in operation throughout every corner and recess of national life ; conspicuous in politics, they are nowhere more signally exhibited than in the department of Foreign Affairs. Chief among these characteristics is that modified materialism which

expresses itself in the English idolatry of the average or the middle course. We live, admire, think, and govern by rule of thumb. To the average every Englishman sets up the chief altar among his household gods ; to this he offers up an unfailing sacrifice of compromises—compromises at every side and relation of life, in art, in thought, in religion, but, above all, in politics. Instances need not be multiplied to prove the truth of a charge which most of us accept with satisfaction as a compliment, pointing with suitable pride to a long calendar of material successes as a decisive testimony to justify our habit. In general politics the results of this rule are sufficiently evident in many of our most cherished institutions : no more palmary examples perhaps could be singled out for mention than the absence of a defined Constitution, and the system of Party Government.

Napoleon's dictum of the "nation of shopkeepers" might stand for the text of a sermon on the subject, and the homily might be pointed and embellished with abundant quotations gathered from any leading article in the *Times* on any subject, at any date, by any hand. It is perhaps the greatest of national temptations, this truckling to the various bias in things : not the mind to master events and drive straight through material impediments, but rather to accept every kick from conflicting circumstances, which perverts you from your destined line as a hint

from actual nature to indicate the true course. And the true course—so far as material success can proclaim it, or the consideration of past experience present that criterion—has lain unquestionably in that tortuous and fortuitous direction. To treat of the value and force of the reservation in this last sentence would betray us into alien fields of philosophical disquisition. Let us collect the fact that the English are profoundly, essentially illogical—a people which rejects with impatience, if not with contempt, any absolute truth or idea, any ideal, except in the sense in which the word has been incorporated into the mechanical and unmeaning claptrap of the stump orator from Cabinet Ministers downward; any logic, except that beggarly assertion of “consistency” which sometimes relieves the hard-driven *argumentum ad crumenam* of its supremacy in political reasoning. This fact collected, we can proceed to its application to our special purpose in this essay. In practice it appears mainly in certain shapes, which may be generally formulated as Conservatism where Conservatism is madness, and Radicalism where Radicalism is sacrilege. In common politics, matters where “*Time is the great reformer*,” it is almost impossible to rouse a sluggish native Toryism to work against that reckless revolutionary: spontaneous degeneration escapes the general curse pronounced against change.

But in things domestic, of the family, matters of

sentiment, Tory hands are always readiest at the levers for subverting a consecrated order of things. Let only certain forms and husks be observed, and the modern revolutionary Conservative will stolidly or cynically deny that the spirit and kernel are there no more.¹ Or, to bring it down to a more definite point still, our habit as a nation in national outward relations is apathetic unconsciousness; our golden rule in Foreign Policy is tradition. First, the whole question of Foreign Affairs is traditionally viewed, accepted in a traditional setting; secondly, the form of the answer is bound and determined by tradition. To take the first, let it not be supposed that this is mere discontented railing at the principle of continuity in Foreign Policy; that, a matter to be presently considered more fully, is not here condemned in anticipation. The complaint is this above all: that the tradition inculcates a general abstinence from foreign questions. These are enveloped in a mysterious halo to exclude the inspection of the public eye. They are represented as things beyond the common grasp—too slippery and elusive for anything but the dry tentacles of the professional diplomatist. We acquiesce. If ever our leaders and

¹ Between the writing and the printing of this sentence a perfect example has opportunely pointed the assertion with actuality. A Bill conferring suffrage on women passed its second reading by a majority of 71—in a House of Commons containing a Conservative majority of 150. A Parliament, Liberal by 40, rejected the thing in 1893.

governors deign to speak of Foreign Affairs (Lord Rosebery, and others after his example, have lately signalised an exception), we are treated probably to some shadowy analogy for or against Irish Home Rule, drawn from Austrian examples imperfectly apprehended and appreciated, and still more imperfectly interpreted to an audience bewildered but delighted. Or the orator, according to his political colour, declaims that "Russia is our enemy," or, "We need have no fear of Russia"; "Turkey must be blotted out from the map of Europe," or, "We are prepared to justify and maintain the integrity of Turkey"; and each dogma is swallowed, and either speaker applauded to the unintelligent echo. But that an English audience should ever have explained to it by one of the hierophants of this mysterious and esoteric caste, the Why and the Wherefore, any inkling of causes, conditions, principles, policies, even facts and figures, that it might be enabled to form its own judgment, and with understanding to approve or reject the judgment of others—that is more than is ever vouchsafed to us by the wiseacres of the occult science. Express this opinion to the farmer, the artisan, to the average English elector in whatever class he falls, and his answer will infallibly be, "We get on pretty well"—the unction usually laid to the easily flattered soul of Hand-to-mouth. Bread is distributed in the country, manufactures go out freely, and raw materials return,

money moves—what can be wrong? Now and then politicians tickle our ears with a luxurious suggestion of fear and danger from invasion; and we run and vote a few more millions for ships. Politically we cannot believe it possible we may die to-morrow, because we eat and drink to-day. Not that this essay is meant to convey the least hint of an alarmist pessimism; most likely we are nowhere near the verge of a catastrophe—only if we were, ninety-nine Englishmen out of a hundred would have heard nothing of it, know nothing of it, believe nothing of it.

“We do pretty well as we are.” Our political obscurantists play upon the weakness expressed in that smug refusal to reason, and they have powerful allies in the great difficulties of instruction either of oneself or others. The man who reads no newspaper lives in the dark; if he reads one only, he is at the mercy of a biased, inadequate, inaccurate distortion or selection of data. Read many newspapers, and you will obtain the satisfaction of gaining (over and above the knowledge of their insufficiency) only a critically extracted modicum of trustworthy information.

No specialist ever respected a newspaper’s opinion in his own subject. Their influence is the proof and the measure of our ignorance.

Few can travel, fewer still can travel to acquire this kind of knowledge. But certainly few weeks in a foreign country suffice to show the traveller the

omissions to instruct and propensity to mislead of English foreign correspondents. When every Englishman spins his own red tape, less many and less various embarrassments were necessary to keep us tied and bound in a passive ignorance coloured with the name of respect for tradition.

Now to consider the second, passing from the limitation of opportunities for judgment to the traditional limitations which enclose our view when formed. For many years past our foreign policy has carried the stamp of the fortuitous—a tangle of chances through which no main line of action has been traced. Chances land us in a particular situation, and we stick there till other chances wash us down again. We never move, only counter-move; never seem to see ahead, to play the game on a comprehensive system. Continuity becomes a dead negation of principle, the consecration of opportunism.

Certain powers, certain attitudes, combinations, designs of powers were a danger a generation ago. Certain friendships, certain acquisitions, certain positions were then valuable. We continue to dread the dangers of the past, to prize the advantages of another epoch. The effects mesmerically follow the ghosts or shadows of causes actually vanished. We had an old quarrel with France; therefore, the French *rapprochement* is contrary to nature and impossible. A clique of one-idea'd enthusiasts in certain provinces of thought and learning, taught us that we were all

Germans together, by blood, by language, by character, and deluded us into glorying in our partial and remote connection with, perhaps, the most uncivilised of the nations in Western Europe; therefore through all temporary strains (*amantium iræ*) we must hold fast by the great "natural tie" with Germany, content to see ourselves thwarted and outwitted, because it is by the jealousy and dislike of cousins. Disraeli, possessed by an Orientalism which Western civilisation has generally agreed to call vulgarity, hated Russia, and shrank from the prospect of Constantinople as an outpost of the West in the East, a seat of Christian empire; therefore, while other terrors wax and wane, the bugbear of danger from Russia dominant on the Golden Horn (and vulnerable from the Mediterranean) remains too obtuse for any light of scepticism to penetrate. Learn nothing, forget nothing: that is continuity.

If that is the complaint, where must the remedy be sought? Whence must we seek to add the note of the masterly, the imperial, the greatly conceived, to our pottering feebleness? A great statesman could do it: but they are bred at intervals of centuries. Statesmen of the second order could do it if given a motive power, if charged with communicated forces. In fact, the spirit of the timorous trustee of political infancy must give place to the confidence of the plenipotentiary representative of rational citizens. Responsibility once defined, loses

half its anxious burden. Create a public feeling in foreign affairs ; let Englishmen at large have a voice in deciding whether they will label themselves "splendidly isolated," or deliberately take a part in Europe. Is this possible? The late Armenian agitation in England was no example, as being (where genuine) essentially unpolitical—much like the attempts of the very uneducated audience of a melodrama to lynch the villain: an enthusiasm scarcely to be classed with dramatic criticisms. If an issue, plainly political, were to be presented to the English people by some fresh turn in the struggle against Turkish misrule, the case would be different. A proposal to incorporate Crete or Macedonia with Greece would furnish a fair example.¹ The Conservative party has foreseen the possibility of a public opinion being cast and trained to bear on external questions; and probably no other cause (excepting the adaptive appetite of place-hunting) has been more efficient for the incorporation of clipped Liberalism in the Tory programme, than the hope that by fully distracting the people with local government and parochial concerns they will be able still to prey securely on the direction of foreign policy, that choice last preserve for administration practised as a sport. The allusion to the late Armenian agitation intro-

¹ Where events succeed each other with rapid change from day to day, no correction could bring this sentence up to date. Actuality of detail, greater or less, does not affect its function in the argument.—*February, 1897.*

duces the question : Why has a great uprising of popular feeling been possible, if not on this occasion, at least on an occasion presenting certain obvious analogies? Why were Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian speeches in 1879 punctuated by the applause of thousands night after night, and echoed by the enthusiastic approbation of millions of readers on each morrow? The answer may be drawn from the dictum of a great historical and constitutional lawyer: "In matters of the head the people are always wrong, in matters of the heart always right." Paring down the picturesque overstatement, you have a great truth left. And not only are the people right in matters of the heart: in those matters alone they form an opinion, right or wrong. But every great question of foreign policy, rightly represented, can be made to appeal to the heart, and not merely treated as a subject for the intellect. It is a Liberal's duty to see that this face of great issues is turned to the electorate. There is a manner in which dry alternatives of alliance or isolation, of closer or colder diplomatic relations with this or that Power, can be made to wear an aspect of tangible humanity. Englishmen can be taught to see that they are not dealing with an unrealisable impersonal parcel of diplomats and chancellery officials, but with a nation, a vast body of men of like passions with themselves.¹

¹ It is worth while just naming in a note some few other occasions when England has been thrilled throughout to a lively sense of sympathy

Then representative government will have penetrated the last fortified corner of privileged administration. It has not been sufficiently recognised that the supercilious peevishness of the expert who deprecates criticism is perhaps the most powerful of the defences of privilege in administration. Nobody grudges the experts their monopoly of technicalities, but they must not be allowed to fence the whole subject off from consideration by putting these forward to disarm critics. The importance of technicalities can be restricted and defined, and the matter presented as a system of large plain questions, to be dressed, and adapted, and applied afterwards as the experts choose. But to the people these questions must go in principle, presented in the form best calculated to elicit the popular judgment. To get at the general mind you must touch the general feelings—in fact, play through the heart on the head.

The argument has led to another question, far too large and intricate to be here included and treated. It has been assumed in the last paragraph that a State has feelings; and we are landed in that vexed region of dispute, the morality of nations. Here it must suffice to dogmatise summarily:—(1) the position that the existence of international law and comity is proof that there is some kind of inter-

in foreign matters—the year 1848; the American Civil War; the unification of Italy in all its stages—leaving the moral to appear of itself in support of the general argument.

national morality ; and (2) the reservation that in pursuing the analogy between morality in the individual and in the State, we must stop short of all moral feelings which are not essentially personal. That is, all such morality as in the individual is consciously sanctioned or actively motivated by his membership of a community, is inapplicable to a State ; because a State can be merged in no larger unit except the unsubstantial, visionary society of a Cosmopolis, a "Federation of Mankind" : a term is wanting to the proportion, making calculation impossible. But the springs of *personal* morality are present in the State equally. The whole body of citizens is capable at least of the passions of friendship, hatred, sympathy, jealousy ; and shares in the sensations of pride and humility, collective strength and common weakness. All which might almost be summed by saying that *honour among States* exists. Citizenship is not the justification of honour in the individual ; nor can the non-existence of world-citizenship exclude it from the State.

A phrase has here directly confronted us with an objection, apparently powerful, towards which the argument had verged before. A good Liberal may be scared by the free assertion of the existence of honour in the State into protesting "This is flat Jingoism." And in this place we may most appropriately consider the causes, the nature, and the remedies of that disease. For a disease it is most

surely : a perversion of certain natural tendencies, a misrepresentation of certain motive feelings ; in its essence a kind of vicarious boasting, conceit upon resources not your own. A Jingo speaks with the same personal pride of our "irresistible fleet" and "overflowing Treasury" that a vulgarian in a minor field might display in telling what a big balance he has in the bank, or how high, richly gilt, and impenetrable are the iron railings round his newly purchased park. But the vulgarity is not equally condemned as offensive in the two cases. And the matter may be explored a stage deeper by asking the question, Why the fat, unwarlike little man who, from the security of a home which he has no intention of quitting for perils and adventures, expends imaginary millions, sweeps the seas with paper fleets, paints whole continents and territories red in his mind's atlas, beards all the Powers of Europe single-handed, is treated as anything else but a comic braggart ?¹ Why, when we hear a man asserting the destined right of the Anglo-Saxon race to possess the world, and proclaiming the infallible superiority of an Englishman over two Frenchmen, three Prussians, five Spaniards, and so on *ad libitum*, do we not with one consent write him down an ass, if possible convey to his notice what we have written,

¹ To refer to the *locus classicus* of the nickname Jingo : "*We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do,*" etc. The words italicised, rightly viewed, have considerable humour.

and have done with it? (It is only right to preface that the creature sits on both sides of the House, discredits both parties in so far as he is identified with them. For the purposes here treated, it is the same whether a Jingo proclaims the belief that a nation is an armed mission organised for spiritual purposes, or a joint-stock company for the acquisition by all means of the greatest possible area of landed property while imposing itself as a divinely appointed oligarchy administering a world of inferiors).

The answer is : because he is a ludicrous representative of instincts, sentiments, aspirations in themselves essentially sound, natural and wholesome ; ludicrous, but the only representative—a grotesque caricature where we have no portrait. That fact alone lends him any strength or importance, and it may at certain seasons lend him effectual strength and determining importance. As you might say, we have no safety valve but this steam-whistle. What, then, are these elements of national character which find a mutilated and distorted expression through the Jingo?

A nation is sick or decaying in which the pride and satisfaction in its own strength and resources are dormant or extinct. Patriotism divorced from the military instincts becomes a nominal, academic shadow ; though these may express themselves sane or corrupted, in chivalry or in brutality. The feeling

which, if not continually effective, at least stirs in the heart of an Englishman who beholds a great English fleet or a body of English troops ; who reads of some courageous behaviour of an Englishman ; who meets a British blue-jacket in a strange port, or hears " God Save the Queen " played in a foreign country : that is a natural, honest and creditable feeling. And for some time past it has been sneered at and suppressed, till no outlet was left it but the pitiful frothings of the Jingo. It was a familiar butt for the type of man whose ideals in life are a good dinner and a bad novel : as expressed by the Jingo, a legitimate butt ; though such criticisms justly did as much to rehabilitate the true spirit they attacked under a false and shoddy form, as the falsity and shoddiness had done to discredit it.

Similarly the sense of pride and exultation in physical strength is a sane and healthy attribute in the individual, but for more than a generation in England it has been misdirected into a coarse and trivial athleticism. An outlet was necessary ; and the natural outlet was not opened to it—a temperate, organised, rational military feeling in the individual. Thus, as the ideal of sport has been trodden and obliterated under the heel of the professional, so the more real forms of patriotism—the elevating sense of collective prestige and honour—have been destroyed by the Jingoes who stole and abused the representation of them. Meanwhile the causing mischief has

abated. Of late we have seen a great reaction against the prevalence of the horsewhipped frame of mind as a substitute for sensitive patriotism. Here, as elsewhere, signs are not wanting nor obscure to prove that we are upon the threshold of a new epoch—an epoch of which perhaps the prevailing note will be a return to natural sanity from a number of morbid perversions and exaggerations in every direction of life. And these are just the times when it is of crucial importance to declare that the true work of Liberalism is not to cry “Progress,” and reel blindly without fixed aim or direction, caring only to move, but the progressive (one might more safely write continuous or successive) adaptation to permanent established ideals—ideals presented elsewhere in this book in their most tangible and real shape as the normal.¹ We must not be afraid to be told that our Liberalism is turned reactionary, if by principle it has steadied from its opportunist shiftings; we may pull with our faces set astern, but the boat goes ahead.

We have been witnesses of a potent, almost universal change of opinion in the matter of armaments: potent, for it has given us an enormously increased fleet; almost universal, for no party has protested against a movement which all felt to originate deeper than party oppositions and differ-

¹ It is perhaps hardly necessary even to hint a caution against confusing the normal (the ideal, as simply expressed by sane instinct) and the average, as considered earlier in this essay.

ences dare to penetrate. This change in the public mind, this new spirit with its manifested powers, is at present common property, unenclosed ground ; the duty of the Liberal party, as the desire of every party, must be to capture it, appropriate this material for its own impress ; adopt, guide, and direct this impetus on the lines of its own principles. The Jingo must not seize it ; and the more precise, conscious and articulate this vague groping instinct towards a reformation becomes, the less the Jingo is to be feared.

Because he is the weakest point we offer to critics without, it is an easy transition from the analysis of the Jingo to a consideration of the foreigner's view of England. The important question, "Why are we unpopular in Europe?" is worth asking yet again. Recent events abroad, with the stirring of some recent ideas on foreign policy at home, have caused it to be asked often enough, but always to be answered with a smug impenitent satisfaction. Hypocrisy is so much the besetting sin of the race, that it is all but against nature for an Englishman in any public position quite to divest himself of the Pharisee. The pretext, pharisaically alleged, justly increases the odium it sets up to account for. It was not pleasant reading for foreigners when they saw us proclaiming ourselves unpopular from our very strength and merits. Nor was it true ; or, if true, a comparatively small part of the truth. Other factors are far more

in cause. We are a selfish Power ; but all Powers are that. What statesman dares to be altruistic at his clients' expense? But we practise our selfishness under the most elaborate forms of deception, with a hypocrisy so intimately radical in our very national fibre, that we deceive no one so much as ourselves. Why are we still in Egypt? The truth is, because we wish to control the Suez Canal, increase our prestige in the world, fortify our position in the Mediterranean. But that is not the answer ninety-nine Englishmen out of a hundred will give you: " Because we have a great work for civilisation to do in Egypt ; because we have introduced justice, solvency, prosperity, stability to a country where these luxuries of the West had been unknown." Your apologist's heart warms as he recounts it, and it becomes more than ever impossible for him to analyse his motives to the bottom. The natural passion in every Englishman cries out so strongly for order and administration, that he really believes in his divine right to step in wherever there is mismanagement or confusion, and establish his ideal—a good, going business concern. To set any other considerations against that is doctrinaire pedantry to him. If Continental Powers suggest that observance of pledges comes before even the right of seizing to run at a profit what others could only run at a loss, that must be their ridiculous jealousy of our talents for government.

Interest is the motive of national policy ; every nation acknowledges it, some with sincerity, some under pretences. But the grievance of the world against us is not only the uncandid allegation of other springs of action ; partly also it is the meanness of our conception of our interest. Here, as elsewhere, we have mistaken economics for morals ; the more idealist our judges, the greater the crime appears. Our heart is so habitually in our breeches' pocket, that when by some curious anomaly of character a genuinely unselfish enthusiasm takes us, foreigners not unnaturally suspect that more sinister considerations are in the background. The commercial traveller turned knight-errant can hardly complain of suspicions that he means to hit the fair lady in distress for a commission. Our conception of interest is mean, because it does not include goodwill and prestige among advantages to be sought for in the first place. Yet consider the striking example of Italy—the one people in Europe which has a real affection for us, affection expressing itself in every imaginable form, from literary sympathies (of long standing these) to the good word spoken in our favour by every Italian, from prince to cabman. Where does the affection come from ? Two men, more than any other cause, we have to thank for the kindly feelings of our Mediterranean ally : Palmerston and Gladstone—two men and a warm outburst of popular enthusiasm rare enough in a foreign question.

Common "interests" we have, undoubtedly; but "interests" are weak to produce such strong and sure friendship. Italy is the one European power to whom we have done unselfish service, giving help in exchange for neither money nor provinces. Services actuated by disinterested enthusiasm have repaid themselves in their own coin; there alone there would be a responsive outburst of popular feeling in our favour were we to be involved in a danger, or threatened by a calamity. That is an alliance not in the sense of a business contract between Governments, but a union between peoples. Personal feeling is operative in masses: the same factor that makes the Dual Alliance incalculably stronger than the Triple—at least, for all purposes short of the actual battlefield. That, surely, is a consideration which may be urged without the reproach of desecrating business matters with sentiment.

Indeed, we do profess at times and in certain references, motives larger and more honourable, at any rate in scale, than our business interests. Certain enthusiasts talk of the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race, and look forward to a day when the whole world shall speak English. The state of mind of these prophets is almost too humiliating to conceive; and the theory is based on numerical futilities—calculations which if made three centuries ago in regard to our own day, would certainly have given a result

ludicrously discrepant from the present actual event : a test too rarely applied to them, unhappily.¹ But nothing is too foolish to be worth considering in an adversary ; and in consideration of this view we may fitly introduce a few words upon two important topics—the Empire and the National Principle. Before we speak of the English race possessing the earth it is well to reflect what we mean by our terms—if one may employ such an unprophetic method. People talk wildly, as if the small English element in the hybrid hordes which occupy the vast territories of the United States of America entitled us to rank them as within the field of dominion of the English race : the empire of a race is a very different thing, a master-people powerfully, by government and civilisation, training kindred successors to itself—like Rome. The English genius is rather colonising than imperial ; in Canada the English become every year more American, the French remain French. What a difference between a Romanised Gaul, or Briton, and an Anglicised Hindu ! To be permanently fruitful empire demands two conditions—great superiority

¹ What, for example, would a calculating prophet in Elizabeth's time have foretold as the state of Europe, even in population alone, three centuries ahead ? Or even fifty years ago, as the state of the Far East to-day ? Think of Petty's forecast of London ! Mr. John Morley admirably described prophecy as the most gratuitous form of mistake ; if so, prophecy by the ready-reckoner is certainly the most wanton form of blunder.

of one civilisation among races not too remotely akin to assimilate. Empire in the true sense of the word—it is well to repeat the truth—we have not so much: colonies are not properly an empire. The French foreign possessions, of which we speak with a truly British judgment as “not paying,” “not successful,” are an empire, a France extended over seas. Precisely the importance of the movement towards Imperial Federation lies in this, that it would mean a rational codifying of our present confused federal relations with Greater Britain, such as would give the whole body a good many of the advantages of an empire. We now combine a curious compromise between the two: a compromise, as usual, symptomatic of looseness, not to say absence, of thinking and indefiniteness of intention. Indeed, only a large and precise principle can co-ordinate the big unwieldy material of the question. It is to be sought in a clear idea of main purpose. The work of a nation in the world is not to colour maps red rather than yellow, and indefinitely accumulate noughts at the end of the figure of its revenue, but to express at its highest perfection its national type. Governments and constitutions are the grammar and syntax of such expression. Therefore a good Liberal, while admiring and glorying in the characteristics of his own race, will not let a narrow pride blind him to the merits of kindred types, even of the most alien types; patriotism is none the worse for looking beyond its own waist-

coat buttons. The doctrine of an apostolic mission entrusted to the English race to inculcate its language and habits all over the world, to the exclusion of other concurrent civilisations, he will reject with disgust and contempt. If Liberals do not any longer say, as some once did, "The Colonies may go if they like," it is not that they would be parties to a second folly like the American War, but that they agree in desiring to hold them in union by other bonds than shackles. If any Colony were likely or able to develop itself into a distinct national type, it would be no longer our duty to attempt to enforce an alienated connection. We find no fault with the Duke of Devonshire's statement that our naval resources are as much destined for the protection of every English settlement in the world as for the defence of our own shores. But the same principle which makes us welcome and maintain our free expansion as a nation, claiming no small fraction of the world as our field, compels us equally to recognise every reasonable assertion of nationalism within ourselves. No particular essay in this book has been devoted to a restatement of Home Rule for Ireland as part and parcel of our creed: those articles rather have been treated which for the moment are the text of burning questions. To say that Home Rule is not one of these is a frank statement of tactics and possibilities. While we write, the suggestion of a material grievance¹ is

¹ "The Financial Relations Commissioners' Report," Jan., 1897.

proving so effective a solvent applied to the more selfish and hollow portions of the body of Unionist opposition, that any moment may justify the restoration of Home Rule to a practical prominence corresponding to the priority in interest, even in affection, it occupies in every genuine Liberal. We are as determined as ever to allow nationalism, where genuine and substantive, to express itself, as our principle demands, in national government. Considerations of political convenience, sense of the inadequacy of the central Parliament to deal with the vast body of imperfectly delegated provincial affairs it necessarily neglects at present, desire to atone by even a tardy generosity for past sins and unscrupulousnesses: these all are operative, but the cardinal motive which keeps us to Home Rule is that unshaken faith in nationalism as the prime principle in all greater politics, which the noblest Englishmen have expressed for a century, and which lessons presented in every continent of the world, plain to the dullest eye, from day to day fortify and establish.

This national principle, even apart from any other consideration of right or policy, is sufficient to decide a Liberal's point of view when he regards one of the most momentous events in the foreign affairs of 1896—the violent invasion of the territories of one State by a band of independent (let us hope the epithet may be most clearly and unmistakably justified) free-

booters, themselves subjects of the suzerain of the State they invaded. Just as we call for the legalising of Irish nationality, so we demand respect for other nationalities included in our greater unit of civilisation, though those be insignificant, unsympathetic, or even hostile to ourselves. The Boer Republic (for which we have no reason to pretend the slightest sympathy or liking) was and is absolutely justified in not largessing the privileges of citizenship among the motley horde of speculators who gathered to exploit its resources. Else, what defence has a small State for its nationality, when it is master of natural resources calculated to attract an outnumbering multitude of fortune-hunting settlers? The dangers of a little State of a few scores of thousands hardly come home to a nation of forty millions. But that its right was not more readily and universally acknowledged in England is only one proof among many how suppressed and apathetic the sense and very conception of citizenship are become among ourselves.

We say here no word either for or against the imaginary project of uniting all South Africa in a British Empire or Federation; that lies not only out of range, but beside the mark. We may have to fight with the Boers to decide which of two possibly incompatible races and nationalities is to prevail; but in that hypothetical contingency let us at least be sure that our method is an open hostility and not a

burglary, rather more romantic for scale and scene, but otherwise not essentially different from the vulgar every-day examples of housebreaking. And let us hear no more of the disingenuous apology which justifies Dr. Jameson's raid by the false analogy of the Elizabethan sea-captains who gained a great part of the British Empire by methods at least akin to privateering. It is high time the glamour was stripped from the ugly dealings of militant finance. Dr. Jameson's men attacked not the greatest empire of the day, but a small isolated republic; not under a state of war, but in perfectly friendly relations. Mr. Rhodes talks of our "unctuous rectitude"; the sneer is justified. But if it is our national calamity that all our well-doing should carry the Pharisaical grease, still we shall hardly consent to an injustice merely to please a rough colonial opinion off which, perhaps, something more than the grease has been rubbed. "Expansion" is, no doubt, a taking hobby, but it is one which, under other names, has carried not a few of its riders into Newgate.

Some way back in this essay the phrase occurs, "military instincts may express themselves either in chivalry or brutality"; this business of the raid suggests that a great part of the public opinion in England has very imperfectly seized the difference between the two qualities. Apparently, a little recklessness thrown into the inferior scale was quite enough to equalise the balance. Touch your burglar

with the least air of the highwayman, and he becomes the perfect knight. Admiration for such courage as was shown (it sinks pretty small after the full deductions have been made for a number of other conditions) was well enough ; but in the vacuum of minds unbalanced by principle, such sentiment was able to surprise and overthrow the whole judgment. We need not here inquire how much the Poet Laureate's effusion contributed to quieting this enthusiasm. At least, the Liberal party may congratulate itself that it did not consider the matter from this essentially feminine point of view. And the failure of the attempt spared us the eventual demonstration how far the raiders were justified in the hope that though, if unsuccessful, they might be repudiated by their Government, success was sure of countenance and adoption.

But the main point recalls from this digressive illustration—this faith in the national principle it is our duty to foster and confirm. Great orators and great leaders in the past have not found it difficult to make an effective appeal to the belief. It has already been urged that we must use the national interest as a kind of greater personal interest to induce Englishmen to exercise their duties as self-governing citizens; and argued that we shall be no less patriotic for recognising elsewhere that same national unit, our sense of membership in which is itself patriotism. Our past enthusiasm for Italy a nation; our late

uncongenial respect for the Boers a nation; our party's adoption and maintenance of the cause of Ireland a nation: these stand all together, as kindred manifestations of a principle which has become a deciding element in the formula of modern Liberalism.

There is a constant difficulty in attempting to include in small limits a statement, even rudimentary, of the principles inspiring a set of beliefs in any great province of opinion. The scale leaves it open to the reader to complete amiss what is hinted in outline, and to distribute wrongly the emphasis and importance of a number of considerations expressed with insufficient detail to determine their proportions. But the notion of this book was not a formal programme composed of articles exhaustively treated; but rather the expression of the guiding beliefs of authors, essentially agreed, but freely differing in non-essentials, as applied to a selection of representative topics; with the purpose of confessing, no less than producing, convictions; of suggestion rather than demonstration; of indicating and inspiring, more than of elaborate instruction. The difficulties of the method can be only partially neutralised by an attempt to anticipate the more obvious misunderstandings and objections. But one thing has been so specially emphasised in this essay in particular as perhaps to prove a stumbling-block—a form, if a modified form, of militarism. The prominence given it is justified equally by the excessive anti-militarism

which infected the Liberal party for many years past, and by the evident tendency to return to a more human view of the question. I am free to confess my belief that the moral advantages of conscription¹ (if only as promoting that genuine, friendly, civic equality, whose home is the *café* of a Latin country, but which political levelling seems unable to give us in England) incomparably outweigh the economic objections; and to suggest that those who declaim unconditionally against war are very imperfectly conscious of the horrors of peace—another side view upon our general materialism. But all this in parenthesis; these opinions appeared too personal, not to say eccentric, for me to be justified in introducing them in the body of the argument. What has been written above upon the wholesomeness and necessity of the military instinct is not to be reckoned as a profession of militarism in the offensive sense of the word. Military insolence as manifested in Germany—the claim of a citizen while on service to impose himself on citizens who are not—is a disgusting and horrible thing; where it does flourish,

¹ In an article of extraordinary interest and brilliant ability by a French publicist, who is as well informed about other peoples as he is critical of his own, I find the admirable phrase, "The army has become at once the bulwark of national security and the school of patriotic virtue." (M. de Pressensé in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Feb. 15, 1897.) These words are a text I should much have liked to enlarge upon, if the whole of this matter of conscription were not so subordinate, as well as so personal, as scarcely to justify more than a hint at two main heads of argument in its support.

largely due perhaps to such service not being represented as rendered to the country, the body of fellow-citizens. Neither does this essay call for war recklessly and unconditionally ; you may be a believer in the duel as a wise and honourable institution, and yet not wish everyone to walk armed, and settle all disputes by the sword. Arbitration is an admirable practical convenience ; universal arbitration is a foolish and feminine dream. No sane, civilised man would fight for the possession of a piece of property in dispute ; but no honourable man takes damages in the Divorce Court. That we should submit the Venezuelan Question to arbitration is a satisfactory piece of common-sense ; if statesmen can draw up a general treaty providing for arbitration in all disputes with the Americans, so much the better. It is well that this alternative should be formulated and organised. Though they are our cousins (it is no mere paradox to put it in that way ; remote kinship is quite as effectual for hate as for love : what South German hates a Frenchman as profoundly as he does his Northern kinsman ?) we need not fight over every commercial or material difference. But those statesmen cannot deceive themselves so much as to suppose that their treaties of arbitration will not shrivel to ashes in the heat of indignation which an insult or a humiliation to the national honour must kindle. The more treaties of arbitration, the better ; we welcome the logical assignation of suitable

remedies to a particular class of difficulties. But they do not supersede war ; only reasonably limit the sphere of its proper employment.

It was no part of the scheme of this essay to enter into the *minutiæ* of detail. Detail has been the curse of Liberal propagandism in every department during these unfortunate last few years. The same mischief made itself felt in the particularism which has cracked the essential unity of all Liberals into sections, and groups, and individual monomaniacs. A little logic, and so much might be done. The re-assertion of principle is the essence of this book, and it is only to presenting principles for the direction of outward relations that this essay was addressed. Details, to recur to a point treated earlier, are naturally below the range of common popular consideration. Their importance in foreign affairs has been emphasised to excess as a precaution against public scrutiny by those whose interest lay in such concealment. And, strangely enough, the sacredness of continuity in foreign relations was regularly alleged in justification. I have attempted to show that continuity, so misunderstood, appeared to external critics as unprincipled vacillation, as a casual, accidental sequence of Opportunism. If we look for the most conspicuous continuity and the steadiest consistency in policy, we must turn our eyes to the most organised democracy in Europe. France is the golden example of established principle regulating policy so that logical

continuity is apparent and cardinally determining through all minor variations. The reason is patent. Every Frenchman knows the great objects of his national ambition. The hopes and aims of France are actively present in every individual citizen—present, in fact, with the liveliness and force of a personal sentiment. Have we anything of the kind in England? Is there any principle of external relations which the average Englishman clings to with passion or is indignant to see outraged? We have the predilections of individuals, as we have the half-academic preferences of clubs and groups; but for anything larger than that, the splendid genius for politics which distinguishes Englishmen in matters domestic seems to desert them, leaving an unreasoning lethargy rarely awakened. We have forgotten the meaning of the word Ministers; it is as if the butler of a great house were allowed to choose and invite the guests, plan the amusements, fix the scale of living, and generally interpret authorised delegation to administer as equivalent to abdication on the master's part of his sovereign rights of decision.

But once more to return. I have not attempted to suggest the details of foreign policy, to specify relations with particular Powers, or define England's attitude in particular questions or particular quarters of the world. It remains, however, to reconsider from a fresh point of view a matter already treated under another light. Nothing has been said of continuity,

regarded from the party point of view. Has a party a foreign policy? Is there a difference, beyond the personal, between Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office and Lord Kimberley? Can a Liberal Foreign Minister feel that his work there is as much part of the expression of his Liberalism, as, say, a Liberal Home Secretary or Vice-President of the Council? The question is of extreme delicacy; the answers exposed to every sort of misconstruction. Deny it, and a great part of your political friends will cry out against you for a traitor; affirm, and the enemy accuses you of preferring party to country. Frankly, however, the answer here given will be a qualified but still a definite affirmative. Liberals to-day need not scruple to admit that their foreign policy has been often unfortunate in the past; perhaps almost always through playing with our besetting sin of sectional particularism. The noisiest usurp the right of speaking for all, and the faddist who has not logic enough to subordinate expediencies and classify duties is invariably the noisiest. Yet it is still doubtful if Lord Rosebery's wise warnings of this danger, and their trenchant justification in event at the black election of 1895, have been sufficient to teach the party common-sense. But, without prophesying on that point, it may be observed that in our foreign policy Liberalism has displayed a much more hopeful recovery of nerve than in any other department. Nerve and confidence in a cause: those are the

desiderata to make us once more an organised and powerful (not to add a triumphant) party. Chaos hardly gives nerve, nor is confidence kindled by having an encyclopædia for a war-cry. Still, there are signs of better things. But putting aside the fact that our lapses into incapability have perhaps been more frequent and grievous than those of our rivals, with the reason for such inferiority, and resuming the question of difference between parties at the Foreign Office, I would reposit it and ask, Is there difference of direction as well as of execution? Has Liberalism at home natural affinities abroad, natural sympathies in certain quarters? And the answer is yes, with a *but*. Put it in this way. Suppose a body of English electors adequately informed (by those whose duty, after all, it is to be their instructors) of the cardinal conditions of European politics—so well informed, at least, that France, Italy, and Germany are something more to them than so many names distinguishing portions of the unknown—and made aware that it is the right and the business of every one of themselves to form his opinion and express his desire in foreign questions; suppose, further, that an audience of such citizens who call themselves Liberals is asked its preference among these foreign nations whose distinctions and characteristics each one will *ex hypothesi* have apprehended—at least, in broad lines and rough colours—will not the same opinions and beliefs in virtue of which he calls himself

a Liberal make him look primarily with sympathy at one and antipathy at another Power before he comes to correct and modify, as necessary, the partisan result of that first view by regard to his own country's collective interest?

Surely a Democrat will discover affinities to a nation of Democratic genius; the Liberals will surely turn with enthusiasm to the country whence the sparks flew over to us which kindled that slow conflagration of privileges and inequalities that is the history of Liberalism in England during this nineteenth century. Mr. Gladstone has stated publicly, not once nor twice, his well-known sympathy for France, and his belief that England and France, two national civilisations more essentially akin, more deeply inter-influential in past and present than any two others, might together perform a great work for universal civilisation. And more than that: we see in France actually presented those principles which were once the backbone of Liberalism in England—proud, individual independence of freemen in the congenial sphere of an immensely extended peasant proprietorship, and an admirably universal sense of permissive or directive participation and responsibility in the common acts and counsels of the State. The most convinced believer in the aptness of the English people for monarchical rule, and the most faithful maintainer of the aptness of our Royal Family for sovereignty in England, will do no violence either to

his principles or to his loyalty by admiring the people who show themselves capable of so honourable a form of government as a Republic.

That is only the most elementary indication of a thing that might be worked out with a great variety of arguments—Liberalism actuating the choice of national friendships, or, at least, determining the preferences of an unattached Power. But a hint is all that is here intended; other applications can be freely supplemented.

And now for the reservation, the *but*. This active sympathy for other democracies will be still only one factor among many. A number of considerations are summed up in the golden rule of minding your own business as a nation; though the rule is far from absolute that interference between parties in a foreign State is in no case of civil war or revolution to be permitted. Still, it is nowhere our business to evoke a revolution. Individual Liberals may sympathise with Nihilism in Russia, but a Liberal Foreign Minister is perfectly entitled to improve our relations with the Czar's Government even to the pitch of concluding an alliance. The French democracy does nothing inconsistent in cordially attaching itself to the Russian despotism, though nine Frenchmen out of ten may detest that type of government. It is very probable that the alliance has already done a great Liberalising work in Russia. A good Christian who is intimate with an Agnostic friend is not incon-

sistent, only wisely Liberal. On the other hand, he is thoroughly justified in refusing to dine with a neighbour who is a notorious wife-beater and tyrant. Bad morals are a public offence, bad opinions at most a private difference. Similarly, sacred though we hold the principle of nationality, as above recorded in these pages, a Liberal may, with a free conscience, maintain our existing cordial relations with Austria, the fortuitous aggregate of many nations. In fact, sympathies of character and opinion may have an initiative, positive effect in establishing and keeping a particular course in Europe; but antipathies of opinion will only become considerable when reinforcing a sharp antagonism of interests. For example, if a certain power consistently opposes and thwarts us; if a certain nation in its essential unoriginality has been drilled to conceive a copy of our English national ambition, so that this younger understudy tries to oust us from our part in the world; then the patriotic grievance of threatened interests and malicious jealousies will be powerfully reinforced in a Liberal's mind by his proper political contempt for a people who allow the form of Parliamentary and civil liberties which they are incapable of realising to be reduced to a humiliating pretence by a morbid egoism aping the effete forms of mediæval sovereignty. Once more the strongest bond, knitted of both kinds of tie, may be exemplified in our connection with Italy, in whatever precise category of relations—alliance,

entente, etc.—it be officially registered : the broad view cares little for these pigeon-holes. It is hardly necessary here to speak of a third kind—dynastic connections. Their importance has been so greatly reduced by popular feeling (indirectly reflected into even the most autocratic monarchies), that in the instance most conspicuously present, perhaps, to everyone's mind, they can merely be described as a slight security for good, or a slight restraint upon bad, behaviour, for the nation, through its Royalties, to hold or to exercise.

The concluding pages of this essay must summarise and reiterate, must emphasise anew the dominant notes. If it began by a complaint of certain mischiefs chargeable not only against the party to whom this book appeals, but against the national character as a whole which harbours them, this was not to imply a delusion that that character could be transformed. A fine psychologist has spoken of the "shameful pleasure of self-reproach," a pleasure from which Englishmen, it must be said, more than most indulge in an abstinence. Prophets of evil are indeed popular enough ; Jeremiads on declining trade are all the rage ; preachers of wholesale wickedness and damnation can always draw a full church. But in politics things run otherwise : it is by no means a popular cue to reproach the English democracy with its dull materialism, when a certain class of politicians belaud the same quality

as sound British common-sense; with a neglect of its rights and duties, when flatterers confuse such abstention with the wise general delegation essential to modern democracies. The whole of the opening of this essay was directed against faults which, if in their acuter forms they are simply Conservatism, prevail almost universally in their less pronounced varieties. The Liberal party has to fight against a permanent dead weight: a world of pains shoves the stone to the summit and poises it for a moment, then "the force of nature" carries it away headlong into six years of Tory administration. We have standing odds against us: certainly there are moments when no Liberal regrets the strength of the adverse party; and one satisfaction is constant, that whatever you can work or effect upon such a stiff material is a strong and abiding impression. In Foreign Policy the ignorance and apathy of the people are more than elsewhere due to want of teachers, shortcomings of the party propaganda. And where teachers have not been wanting, much of their work has been flimsy and ineffectual, because no foundation of knowledge was laid. Nations and Powers, provinces and places are unmeaning symbols and ciphers unless previously explained. "France," "Germany," "Concert of Powers," "Balkan Questions"—these are idle shibboleths chucked about as freely from tub-thumper to tub-thumper as such deplorable phrases as "Social Legislation" and

"Social Question," which have become the bad coin of political humbugs of every kind. To deliver politics and the English language of much of this poor mechanically current stuff, a little masculine precision and definition in thought and expression will suffice. If the very word "social" could be tabooed, much humbug would be choked. With the former kind, it is even easier; a little trouble without that mental effort will do it. Go to a village audience, and try to give a picture of a Frenchman—how he lives, what he eats and drinks, what he thinks about and wishes, how he differs from themselves and how resembles—then, and not before, do tirades upon our relations with France begin to take an air of living reality. "*One half the world knows nothing of the life and government of the other,*" is one of those dicta which all the brag of material science and improvement leaves very little less essentially true than it was four hundred years ago. Partly because we prate about the Governments without first realising the life which inspires the Governments.

The first object, then, is to produce feeling, and make opinion possible. Next will come the question of the direction which the motive power thus stored will take to express itself. Here it has been contended that Liberalism must lay hands upon much good matter hitherto put to bad uses, applying to Jingoism Lord John Russell's excellent saying about

dirt. We have to capture and organise to sound purposes much good sentiment and crude patriotism about outward relations, till we can turn out an intelligent citizenship, master in its own house, conscious and proud of its own resources, fitted and resolved to exercise its right of determining their employment. Little Englanders as a party have succumbed to a fate that cannot too speedily overtake the barbarous name which was found for them. The idol of the group was a distorted exaggeration of the pacific principles of Liberalism ; an idol set up by a clique and accepted, as so many unessential things are fetishised among us, with unquestioning deference, till at last a turn of chance knocked the whole thing to dust and put an end to its sanctity and its existence—an existence which without other attributes had caused its sanctity. So blindly do we acquiesce in the actual : a busy section imposes its fad without hindrance ; iconoclastic chance removes the burden—and in a little while we can hardly believe it ever was on our shoulders. Neither disease nor cure breaks our apathy : one might say of the British public that it is a good patient—but a master of catching illnesses.

Next, the English people, impressed with the qualifications and the will for such autonomy, collectively as individually independent, in foreign relations as in domestic liberties, will look round and freely select its friends and enemies in the world.

We have refrained, for reasons before given, from filling up the principle with specifications: experts must follow and complete the reformer, and personal preferences must not be allowed to discolour the principle. But the suggestion may be repeated that our greatest duty is to exercise our adoptive heritage of a part of the Latin civilisation, to vindicate our membership in the true Western unit. Cosmopolitan Radicalism has indeed been exploded, or will finally be exploded when the promised return to natural logic has rectified the confusion between the reasonable spheres of religion and politics—the world and the nation: Christianity an essentially cosmopolitan confession, Nationalism the foundation of politics. But for an extended unit in politics we must look first vaguely to Europe, as far as Europe is an individual civilisation, and next, far more definitely, to the precise and organic unity of the West proper.

We have admitted, frankly, that England is selfish; Liberalism need not hope to do more than interpret that selfishness into determination to be true to our own selves. We are a commercial people, but not unaware that there is more to be done in the world than buying and selling; in past experience we have shown ourselves capable of acts of heroic justice and movements of generous enthusiasm. The merchant can lose himself in the man, the trading company in the nation. Let us ennoble commerce by realising the difference of the merchant-prince and the

petty huckster. We, too, can redeem the adventitious vulgarity of commerce by magnificence of scale, and hold our heads high in the aristocracy of nations by employing our material wealth and industrial resources not as an end in themselves, but as rich and proper means to the attainment of greater triumphs in fields of more ideal and lasting achievement, some-way the Athens or the Rome, not merely the Phœnicia of a new cycle in history.

J. S. PHILLIMORE.

A LIBERAL VIEW OF EDUCATION.

The Liberal view of the State—The activity of the Citizen—The place of Education—Hostile influences—The forces of political and religious monopoly—Historical summary—Oligarchic obstruction before 1870—Confusion of thought—Later Reforms—The Modern Problem—Attacks upon Education—An ignoble spirit—Contrast with Liberal ideals—Concrete expressions of this hostility—(1) Proposals to restrict expenditure—(2) Antagonism to School Boards—Motives of this attack—(a) Short-sighted economy—Its fallacies exposed—(b) Sectarian bias—The work of the School Boards—The Voluntary Schools—The claims of their advocates—Support due to financial rather than religious motives—The injustice of private Government—The Liberal principle of democratic control—The Voluntary School an isolated instance of its violation—Necessity for concentrating on this point—The mistake of 1870—A paralysing compromise—Differential religious instruction—Sectarian control, not Sectarian teaching, the real evil—Suggested scheme—Other Reforms—The age limit—Evening Schools—Technical Education—Its relation to Agriculture—Comparison with other Countries (Denmark)—Skill, not protection, needed—Technical Education and industrial success (Württemberg)—A striking instance—Its relation to Labour—But the primary school the basis—Urgent need for increased efficiency—Relation of Education to Liberal Ideals—The civic spirit—The hope of democracy.

THE State is often spoken of in the language of metaphor, and sometimes defined in the terms of some brilliant paradox. The reason is not difficult to find. There is an absence of exactness in human relations which gives society a certain indeterminate aspect; and an unanalysed conception of the State lends itself as readily as other abstractions to the fancies of epigram and the devices of analogy. But I will

content myself with a simple expression of the view which I think is implicitly recognised in Liberal policy—that it is the purpose of the State to develop the conditions of civic activity, and to promote the growth of individual character.

For in association, however rude its form, those qualities which are specifically human are first brought into play; and the direct value of common action is never more apparent than when the whole of a society combines to mould its future citizens.

This conception of the State again underlies the great Liberal principles of freedom and equality of opportunity. The State makes freedom possible primarily by removing certain restraints upon development, which yield to an ordered form of co-operation. Equality of opportunity can only be recognised as the basis of equitable relations by men who acknowledge a common interest. These ideals are incompatible with an oligarchic constitution which restricts political rights, and degrades citizenship by making it depend upon adventitious rather than the essential attributes—qualities which distinguish, rather than those which unite, the members of the State.

It is the capacity to promote and to extend freedom in this positive sense of activity which is the measure of a nation's greatness; it is the ability to achieve a continuity of method by the similar education of its citizens which is the measure of its

permanency. If a State fails to stimulate such development, it falls short of its object ; if it actively frustrates it, it defeats its own end.

The Liberal doctrine, then, clearly does not begin and end with its application to the form of Government. There are other conditions which make for freedom, and which are indispensable if opportunity is not to be a monopoly, and activity restricted to the fortunate and the rich ; and the first of these conditions lies in the nature of the education.

That freedom implies education is a proposition which only requires to be stated to command immediate assent. The uneducated man is at the mercy of the forces of nature. He is equally exposed to the aggressions of his educated fellow-men. And if activity is thwarted by the absence of provision for education, equality of opportunity is hopelessly debarred. The disability of poverty is stereotyped and intensified if riches alone command the means of instruction. A career, whether in politics, in the professions, or in trade, is only open to the wealthy. It is impossible to find a sharper or a more cruel line of cleavage between man and man.

The history of elementary education in this country illustrates the close relationship between this question and Liberal ideals, for the advance of education has strengthened the agitation for popular Government, whilst the development of

popular institutions has quickened the demand for education.¹

Education makes a man conscious of his personality, and impatient of an artificial distinction founded upon wealth or birth ; while the extension of popular authority enables the popular demand for education to be realised. These two conditions of progress act and play upon each other, as do all the streams that unite to form the main current of a progressive society. Three great educational measures during this century have followed closely on the heels of important Reform Bills. The Education Department was created in 1839, seven years after the first Reform Bill. The Bill of 1867 preceded by three years only the introduction of Mr. Forster's measure of 1870, and the Free Education Act of 1891 followed the extension of the Franchise in 1884.

The wider distribution of political power further enhances in another respect the importance of popular education. For, with the growth of democratic institutions the number of citizens who exercise some direct influence on Government, imperial or local, must be largely increased, and the absence of provision for education means that Government tends to become empirical and unscientific.

¹ Cobden in 1848: "In my opinion every extension of popular rights will bring us nearer to a plan of National Education, because it will give the poor a stronger motive to educate their children, and at the same time a greater power to carry the motive into practice."

A monopoly of education is obviously the surest safeguard of a monopoly of political power. The weapon of criticism is blunted and opposition largely disarmed. Thus it was the unerring instinct of a diabolical sagacity for the interests of a religious oligarchy which prompted penal legislation in Ireland in the last century prohibiting the education of Catholics.¹ Hostility to educational measures in England during a great part of this century has been largely inspired by apprehensions for the safety of existing oligarchic institutions.² Sympathy rather than ridicule was excited by the rhetorical ardour of a speaker during the debate on Mr. Whitbread's Bill in the Commons, who warned the House that "books had produced the French Revolution."³ Sir John Gorst, in his article in the *North American Review*, speaks of that "dislike to intellectual development which is characteristic of a territorial aristocracy." This dictum may be abundantly illustrated from the history of education in England during

¹ It was a condition of education in the Charter Schools, in which alone Catholic children might be educated, that they should be educated as Protestants. Mr. Lecky (Vol. II., p. 204, "History of England in the Eighteenth Century") thus speaks of the system: "The Charter Schools offered a people thirsting for knowledge a cup which they believed to be poison, and sought, under the guise of the most seductive of all charities, to rob their children of the birthright of their faith." The unsectarian system was not founded till 1834.

² Doubtless, the landlords of the early century recollected Plato's shrewd observation, that a revolution in politics begins with a revolution in education.

³ Mr. Francis Adams, "Elementary School Contest," p. 66.

the present century. The House of Lords rejected Mr. Whitbread's Bill in 1807, thereby postponing for sixty-three years the creation of a national system under local administration. The same body offered a stubborn resistance to the creation of the department in 1839, and succeeded in obtaining the withdrawal of the rest of Lord John Russell's educational proposals of that year. Conservative statesmen in the House of Commons, with a few honourable exceptions, have been equally hostile.

The friends of a religious monopoly in education can also boast a record of strenuous and uncompromising vigour. There has always been a strong party in English politics which has frankly regarded it as of greater importance that the schools should be controlled by the clergy than that there should be a system of primary instruction at all. The Bishops have been the chief spokesmen of this view. It was a less mischievous condition in their opinion that the children should not be educated at all than that they should be educated by persons who were independent of the clergy. Ignorance was a less dangerous enemy of "virtue" than secular knowledge. It was idle for an educational reformer to explain that his policy was merely intended to give the State some authority to insist upon a certain standard of efficiency, and was not directed in any hostile spirit against the influence of the Church. The Bishops

only regarded his proposal as a more insidious attack upon religion and morality.

Lord John Russell's Bill in 1839 was bitterly assailed by Bishop Blomfield, who contended that the State had delegated to the Church its functions in the matter of educating the poor. Mr. Fox's Bill in 1850, drawn up on the general principles which governed Mr. Forster's Bill twenty years later, succumbed to the influence of the Church Party in the Commons. Mr. Lowe's measure in 1861 for improving the quality of primary instruction provoked the bitter hostility of Churchmen, who resented the application of any standard at all to the education for which the managers of their schools received a Government grant.¹

These forces of political and religious monopoly united in the past to frustrate Liberal efforts to obtain a national system of education. A further difficulty confronted the Education Party in the extraordinary confusions of thought which have prevailed upon this question. To-day it seems incredible that the interference of the Government in education should have been regarded as an invasion of the rights and liberties of the subject. But it is scarcely half a century ago that educational proposals were

¹ The same outburst of ill-feeling greeted Lord Sandon's half-hearted attempt in 1876 to enforce more stringent terms for the award of a Government grant, whilst the storm of indignation excited by Mr. Acland's circular is still fresh in the public memory.

attacked upon this very ground. The Manchester School of Economics will scarcely be suspected of having sought to extend the province of Government supervision beyond its legitimate limits. And yet Cobden was one of the most prominent of the statesmen who recognised that education fell naturally into the class of State obligations. The root of this difficulty was, of course, a religious one. Anglicans claimed that the Church alone should control the education of the poor. The State was to do nothing but provide the necessary funds. Nonconformists thought that if State interference merely meant the co-operation of the department with the efforts of proselytising Churchmen, it was only a specious name for the most invidious form of tyranny. It is now acknowledged on all hands that education is a duty owed by the State to its children ; that the State schoolmaster is no more an anomaly than the State policeman.¹ But this truth has only struggled slowly into public recognition.

The Act of 1870 represented a great advance. It was the first explicit avowal by the Legislature of this view of the relation of the State to public instruction. Education has since been made "compulsory" and "free" after years of Liberal agitation. Compulsory education was recognised by Liberals as necessary in

¹ Cf. "Mill on Liberty," Chap. V. :—"Is it not almost a self-evident axiom that the State should require and compel the education, up to a certain standard, of every human being, who is born a citizen?"

practice and sound in principle. Education is a necessary condition of activity—a condition which the State must provide, and with which the citizen must comply. In this sense the citizen must be “forced to be free.”

Free education is the logical corollary of compulsory education, but it has an independent justification. It is not, as is sometimes urged, a pauperising measure. A pauperising policy is vicious, because it tends to stifle individual activity and individual initiative. Free education is a direct and powerful stimulus to these forces. The free school, in whatever grade, like the free library in a modern city, or the free theatre in ancient Athens, finds its vindication in the encouragement it gives to intellectual development.

Free and compulsory schools have further been proved by experience to be indispensable to the progress of education. Yearly statistics show clearly enough the influence of the Acts of 1880 and 1891. The passing of these Acts is amongst the most recent incidents in the great educational struggle of the century. The gradual construction of an effective system is the triumph of Liberal efforts. Every step taken in the direction of raising the standard or improving the conditions has been won in the teeth of a Conservative opposition,¹ inspired, first of all, by an ill-disguised hostility to popular instruction, and, in the

¹ The Free Education Act of 1891 was passed by a Conservative Ministry, but Liberals had agitated for it since 1869.

second place, by a genuine mistrust of any system uncontrolled by the Church. Extensions of the franchise have strengthened the Liberal demand for a national system, whilst its necessity was demonstrated by the glaring inadequacy of voluntary institutions.

The Act of 1870 was a tardy recognition of the State's duty. A generation had grown up since Carlyle¹ had uttered his bitter protest and Dean Alford² had drawn his lurid contrast between England and other countries.

It was at last acknowledged that the State owed a duty to its children, and that it was a mischievous condition to leave the mass of the electorate in ignorance.

The modern problem cannot be understood apart from its historical context. The forces which combined to thwart the efforts of educational reformers before 1870 still play an active part to-day. The battle is no longer for an education department or a national system. But the spirit which made those struggles severe and delayed their triumph is alive and potent. There is still a strong party which regards it as of greater importance that the schools

¹ "To impart the gift of thinking to those who cannot think—and yet would in that case think—this, one would imagine, was the first function a Government had to set about discharging."—Carlyle: *Chartism*.

² Dean Alford in 1839:—"Prussia is before us; Switzerland is before us; France is before us. There is no record of any people on earth so highly civilised, so abounding in arts and comforts, and so grossly generally ignorant as the English."

should be controlled by the Church than that they should be efficient. There is still a reluctance to concede to popular control any vestige of authority possessed by a religious society. Nor must it be forgotten that if popular education had few friends half a century ago, it still has many enemies to-day.

What then should be the application of Liberal principles to the modern question? Firstly, we are concerned for the efficiency of education. Education is so vital a condition of national welfare, so indispensable to that free development which Liberalism seeks to make possible, that its progress cannot be too dearly bought. No arbitrary limit can be placed upon the sphere of elementary instruction, for to distribute a good education as widely as the boundaries of the nation is the first duty of the State.

This principle can be illustrated by a contrast: It is urged by some that an education which is not restricted to the merest elements of instruction is out of place for the child of the working man. The State is regarded as a society of men who fall by some natural scheme into certain classes; the children of the rich are to enjoy every educational facility, to use or abuse at their pleasure; the children of the poor are to receive just enough instruction to enable them to attend with some degree of intelligence to their appropriate avocations, and to prevent their committing any flagrant breach of the law. Learning is to be a strict monopoly, a luxury of the

rich ; the intellectual outlook of the poor is to be determined solely by their occupations. This sentiment is, of course, not usually avowed in such naked and unblushing terms, but it is cherished in sullen silence or expressed by inarticulate murmurs in many quarters.¹ It is strongly at variance with the Liberal spirit which refuses to believe that a nation is only concerned to escape the incubus of an incapable proletariat or that education should merely serve a negative purpose, as an auxiliary measure of police. To depress the standard of elementary instruction is to perpetuate existing inequalities ; to intensify the hateful tendency to class isolation ; to banish that sympathy, born of mutual knowledge and mutual respect, which is the primary condition of true national unity. And to prescribe narrow limits to the intellectual activity of a large proportion of the community is to defeat the very purpose of the State. That man is a rational as well as a sensuous creature is, after all, a truth which is as old as Aristotle, although, apparently, new to the Prime Minister ; whose suggestion that there should be inscribed upon the portals of Board Schools as a counsel of perfection to the education enthusiast, " The School Board rate should

¹ " At one time it was an almost accepted rule that there should be a liberal education for a gentleman and a limited one for a peasant. John Knox taught us that there should be one education for a man who ought to be able to equip himself for any vocation in life that his talents justified him to assume."—Lord Playfair: " Subjects of Social Welfare," p. 335.

not exceed threepence," must take rank with his immortal declaration that the agricultural labourer would prefer parish circuses to parish councils. And it will readily be admitted that a policy like this, which aims at reducing to a minimum the responsibilities of the State to provide the conditions of intellectual development, is tantamount to a denial either that society has a human, or humanity a rational aspect—two propositions which are bound up alike with common-sense and Liberal principles. Attacks upon education originating from Hatfield are not to be treated as merely illusory dangers.

The existence of a strong opposition to educational progress springing from this spirit is no empty nightmare of the Liberal imagination. It is admitted by Conservative statesmen. During the debates on the Education Bill of last session, Lord Cranborne made a bitter attack upon the policy of the London School Board, who had dared to place pianos in their schools. Lord Salisbury, in the autumn of 1895, deprecated the payment of high salaries to teachers; and, indeed, he seems incapable of considering any other than the financial aspect of the question. It is the refinement of cynicism—to limit your view of education to the sacrifices which it may demand at the hands of the ratepayers.

It is a great misfortune that this banausic view should be held by men who enjoy a more commanding influence than the country squire. The

complaint comes with an ill grace, as Mr. John Morley has remarked, from men on whose education no expense has been spared ; and the rich man who has enjoyed all the facilities which the country can provide, cuts a contemptible figure when he grudges his contribution to the cost of supplying elementary instruction for the poor, who have no other resources to fall back upon. Such an attitude suggests reflections on the sterilising influence of the surroundings of luxury and of privilege on the generous instincts of mankind. The proposal to place an arbitrary restriction upon national expenditure for education was not the least remarkable of the extraordinary provisions of the Bill of last session. The temper in which it was received by the country at large is not likely to encourage further proposals in this direction, and Sir John Gorst has taken an early opportunity of disowning it in his article in the *North American Review*. "To attempt to limit by a hard and fast line the cost of elementary education is as absurd as to attempt to limit the cost of a gun or a warship."

But its inclusion in the Government Bill was an ominous phenomenon, and gave a proof, if proof were needed, that a Conservative Ministry is the step-mother of education. The spirit of jealous discontent has long been chafing under the progress of education, occasionally to break out into noisy expression under the sympathetic influence of a Primrose League audience. But it will be an evil

day for the country when it comes to dominate the Council Chamber of the nation.

This antagonism to education has taken a concrete form in the attack upon the School Board system. Any proposal to place restraint upon the freedom of action of the School Boards is objectionable to Liberals on two grounds. It is, in the first place, an interference with the administration of a local popular authority. School Boards are elective bodies responsible to the ratepayers, who have the opportunity of pronouncing judgment upon their policy every three years. The remedy, if the School Board is extravagant, lies in the hands of the electors.

Such a policy is, in the second place, a serious menace to the progress of education, for the history of the advance which education has made during recent years is the history of the enterprise and the activity of the School Boards. The services of these bodies to education in large towns are acknowledged by Sir John Gorst:—"Two-fifths of the children of school age are to be found in the Metropolis and in the large county boroughs having their own School Boards. In these the Act of 1870 has worked in the most satisfactory manner; the members have been most generally elected from those who are sincerely desirous of promoting good education, and who take a lively interest in municipal government, and they have established thoroughly efficient schools."

Investigation of the field of work upon which any

large School Board is engaged brings into prominence the importance which such a body attaches to the interests which have been entrusted to its charge. The Liverpool Board, for example, is not content to provide education in elementary subjects during the daytime. It has established schools for woodwork, metal work, and chemistry, and has instituted evening classes for the teachers, which may be attended by teachers in voluntary institutions, as well as by those in their own.

The fruits of the School Board system are the increase in the number of children who receive instruction, and the improvement in the quality of the instruction which they receive. Elementary education is not confined to-day to reading, writing, and arithmetic; but in 1869 rather more than half of the schools inspected only offered those subjects for examination. To-day the education code embraces English, history, geography, and elementary science as class subjects; and modern languages, mathematics, physics, amongst the specific subjects, or subjects taken by individual children in the upper classes. But these subjects are taught far more generally in Board than in Voluntary schools. A larger percentage of Board than of Voluntary schools earn the highest grant for a class subject,¹ whilst

¹ 1894: 85 per cent. of Board schools earned the highest grant for first class subjects, and 87 per cent. for second; Voluntary schools, 68 per cent. in both cases.

19 per cent. of the scholars in Board schools were presented for examination in specific subjects in 1894, and only 6 per cent. of those in Voluntary schools.

It is not difficult, in the light of such statistics, to understand what is meant by the undue competition of the Board schools, or to see in such complaint the most striking testimony to the value of the system.

The Higher Grade schools which have been established by some School Boards are absolutely indispensable, in the absence of any definite organisation of secondary education in the country. These schools are threatened by any proposal to hamper the School Boards. For, although many Continental countries possess an organised and graduated system of education, extending from the primary school to the university, in England there is no such system. Twenty years ago Matthew Arnold drew attention to the chaotic condition of higher education in this country; and the Report of the Commission of last year has served to bring this matter before public notice. The Higher Grade schools in many places supply a very serious omission in our system, and on this ground alone it is criminal folly to restrict the expenditure of the School Boards.

There is another consideration, suggested by the history of the School Board system, which is not without its worth. It was urged by Liberal Educationists before 1870 that education could never be

rescued from its unsatisfactory condition until it was entrusted to local elective bodies. The history of the last twenty-five years shows conclusively the accuracy of this prediction, and vindicates the cardinal Liberal principle of local self-government. The admission of the people to a control over this important branch of domestic administration has effected a revolution in the educational condition of the country. Democratic self-government has once again been proved to be the secret of national progress.

Two motives underlie the opposition to public expenditure on education. The counsels of short-sighted economy appeal to many who have little faith in education itself, and who grudge the money spent upon it as an unprofitable investment. Such a view has no claim to serious consideration. To argue with the man who would apply a commercial standard to the results of education constrains an apology, as implying an admission that you can measure character in terms of hard cash, or that you can describe the purpose of the State in the language of the Stock Exchange. But it is possible to meet the objections which proceed from this source, and to present an overwhelming case to the man who goes to his ledger for his principles. The following passage is taken from Sir John Lubbock's book, "The Use of Life":—

"The year 1870, the year of the passing of the Education Act, was a most important epoch in the

social history of our country. At that time the number of children in our elementary schools was 1,400,000. It is now over 5,000,000. And what has been the result? First, let me take the criminal statistics. Up to 1877 the number of persons in prison showed a tendency to increase. In that year the average number was 20,800. Since that year it has steadily decreased, and now is only 13,000. It has therefore diminished in round numbers by one-third. But we must remember that the population has been steadily increasing. Since 1870 it has been increased by one-third. If our criminals had increased in the same proportion, they would have been 28,000 instead of 13,000, or more than double. In that case, then, our expenditure on police and prisons would have been at least £8,000,000 instead of £4,000,000. In juvenile crime the decrease is even more satisfactory. Turning to poor-rate statistics, we find that in 1870 the number of paupers to every thousand of the population was over 47. It has been as high as 52. Since then it has fallen to 22. The proportion, therefore, is less than one-half of what it used to be. Our annual expenditure on the poor from rates is £8,000,000, and supposing it had remained at the former rate, it would have been over £16,000,000, or £8,000,000 more than the present amount. If, then, we were now paying at the same rate as twenty years ago, the cost of our criminals would have been £4,000,000 more than it is, and our poor rate

£8,000,000 larger. The nation is, therefore, saving £12,000,000 annually in return for increased expenditure on education."

The return of criminal statistics for the year 1894 shows that only four per cent. of the prisoners convicted during that year could read and write well.¹

These figures give a literal accuracy to Victor Hugo's assertion that "he who opens a school closes a prison," and should satisfy even the uneasy apprehensions of the party of economy in education.

There is another motive actuating this hostility to School Boards. Their expenditure and their efforts to raise the standard of education are discountenanced by some who consider that the interests of Voluntary schools suffer in consequence. The improvement in the Board school education is watched with misgiving, because it necessitates some improvement in the education of the Voluntary schools. Here we have a distinct illustration of the difference between the view of education taken by Liberals and that taken by the sectarian party. The friends of Voluntary schools are willing to sacrifice the highest interests of education for the immediate advantage of their own schools and their own party. Lord Salisbury's advice to the Church party to "capture the

¹ Mr. Roebuck in 1850: "You make laws, you erect prisons, you have the gibbet, you circulate throughout the country an army of judges and barristers to enforce the law, but your religious bigotry precludes the chance or the hope of your being able to teach the people so as to prevent the crime which you send round this army to punish."

School Boards" is a striking illustration of this spirit. The progress of education is not regarded as an end in itself. Every question which it raises is considered and discussed without reference to national welfare, but solely from the point of view of the influence of Board schools upon the pockets of voluntary subscribers. The sacrifice of the whole to a part—the only guiding principle of Conservative statesmanship—determines the attitude of the party to this as to other issues. The School Boards are to be crippled, popular education is to be proscribed, the standard of national instruction is to be determined solely by considerations of a sectarian interest. But any proposal to hamper the freedom of School Boards or to thwart their educational policy must be met with a determined resistance. No effort must be spared to safeguard one of the most valuable of our democratic institutions. With regard to School Boards in villages, it is possible that some change may be found necessary in the direction of larger areas. Such a reform would not interfere with the principles of local self-government, and might perhaps conduce to a more generous and a more public-spirited administration.

I have thought it necessary to define at some length the Liberal attitude to these particulars.

The view that public provision for education is a largess from the bounty of the rich for the benefit of the poor, rather than the discharge of an elementary obligation in the interests of the whole community,

has, unhappily, certain prominent adherents. Nothing could be more fatal than the spirit of many of the utterances of public men on education to the sense of a civic relationship¹ transcending distinctions of class, which should unite with the ties of a common history and a common purpose to bind the members of a State into the "Single city."

There is another question in the modern problem which demands the definite and unflinching application of Liberal principles.

Before considering what should be our policy with regard to Voluntary schools, let us examine the claims made on their behalf by Conservative politicians.

It is a common assumption of the Conservative politician that the great mass of the people deliberately prefer a system of education which is directed by religious societies. But can it be reasonably contended that the comparatively slow extension of the School Board system is evidence of the general enthusiasm for definite religious instruction with clerical control?

In the first place, a parish cannot always obtain a School Board. The consent of the Department has first to be gained, and such consent does not always follow an overwhelming vote in favour of the adoption of the School Board system. There is little liberty of choice with a Conservative Government in office,

¹ Who has not noticed the influence in Scotland of the old custom amongst the lairds of sending their children to the village school?

and the present Vice-President of the Council has in one conspicuous instance overridden local sentiment. The provision which fettered local autonomy in this respect was one of the chief blemishes of the Act of 1870.

In the second place, it is not zeal for dogmatic teaching which has preserved the Voluntary schools from extinction. One thousand of these schools contrive to maintain their sectarian existence on an income not one penny of which is due to voluntary subscriptions. The Government grant in these cases suffices to maintain a school which is content with a low standard of efficiency. The present Duke of Devonshire said, in 1876, that it was important to demand that the assistance from the Imperial grant should not exceed the amount of the local subscriptions, because a rough guarantee was thereby provided that a denominational school was not unpopular in a particular neighbourhood. It is unnecessary to point out that no such guarantee exists in these one thousand parishes. But the most conclusive evidence of all is the policy adopted by the managers of a Voluntary school when they have to meet a deficiency of accommodation. The appeal for help is not justified by enthusiasm for religious teaching, but by considerations of finance. The ratepayers are warned, in Mr. Balfour's language, that they are threatened with a School Board. A contrast is drawn between the burdens of voluntary subscription

and an involuntary rate. The love of money and the love of creed are dressed in the same uniform, and their common watchword is the Voluntary school. Railway companies are in some places large subscribers to these schools, and one cannot reasonably regard them as animated by a strong preference for a particular type of dogmatic teaching. To investigate the origin of voluntary subscriptions is to discover the motive of the voluntary subscriber. That motive is, in many cases, to be found in his pocket rather than in his conscience.

But even if such considerations be ignored, what is the strength of the Conservative contention? There is no better test of enthusiasm than the sacrifices which it can command.¹ Even if the indiscriminate volume of voluntary subscriptions, some £800,000 per annum, be placed wholly to the credit of the denominational party, such a sum, in comparison with the enormous resources of wealthy Churchmen, is not a very eloquent testimony to the popularity of the denominational system.

But if the profession that these schools are maintained in the majority of instances in the interest of religion is not honest, it is, further, not original. The party which seeks to perpetuate clerical control at the expense of education has inherited the spirit and sophistry of its Conservative

¹ It is only fair to point out that the Roman Catholics have never abandoned a single school.

forefathers, who while subordinating every consideration to regard for the influence of the Established Church, claimed to be the champions of religion. It was in the name of religion that the country was compelled to leave the education of its children and the training of its teachers¹ in the hands of a religious society which never affected any zeal for secular instruction.² What sacrifices are to-day demanded of us for the same object? Schools which are badly built and badly equipped are to be maintained in perpetuity; the teachers are to be underpaid³ and subjected to religious tests; the children are to be ill-taught: the "religion of the parent"—at any rate, in some cases—to be slighted. The intelligent foreigner, whose function it is to take an impartial and a detached view of our native institutions, would learn with surprise that there are only nine Board schools in which religious instruction is not given, and that the undenominational teaching, which is regarded with such horror by some Churchmen when it is given in a Board school, is the religious instruction

¹ Lord John Russell's proposal to establish a State Training College in 1839 was defeated by the opposition of the National Society. There are to-day 43 Training Colleges, of which 30 are Church of England, 3 Roman Catholic, 2 Wesleyan, and 8 British and Foreign School Society and Undenominational.

² *Vide* Report of Duke of Newcastle's Commission, 1861.

³ It is interesting to compare with the report which shows that the managers of the Voluntary schools were mainly, if not only, interested in religious education, the recent threat of the *Guardian*—to the effect that the Church would employ her schools exclusively for the purposes of religious instruction unless her demands for further assistance were satisfied.

which is given to all day boys in the higher schools of the country.¹ We cannot therefore accept the hypothesis that the continued existence of those schools is justified by a general and deliberate preference for this type of teaching and control, or that it is a genuine apprehension that religion will be otherwise neglected which prompts the majority of subscribers to support them.

Now turn to the question of their control.

In eight thousand villages the "National" School is the only school. It is governed by a body of men over whom the inhabitants of the village and even the parents of the children have no control, and such autocratic government carries with it opportunities of unfair and ungenerous treatment of Nonconformists. These schools are too often regarded by the clergy as institutions for making Churchmen rather than citizens, and the atmosphere is consequently uncongenial to the child of Nonconformist parents. The trust deed of many of these schools incorporated with the National Society obliges the managers to employ only Churchmen on the staff, and undoubtedly such a restriction is a substantial hardship, as it means that in a number of villages the teaching profession is closed to Nonconformists. The position, therefore, of such a Voluntary school in a village is flagrantly at

¹ *Vide* letter written by the Rev. J. Llewellyn Davies to the *Times* of December 19th, 1896.

variance with Liberal principles. The school is public only in the sense that it receives assistance from public sources, and that the children of the inhabitants are compelled to attend it. Its management is private, secret, and autocratic, and the tone of the school is necessarily influenced by its associations. A large number of the inhabitants regard it with indifference, if not with open hostility; the people are deprived of the invaluable training of local self-government, and there is no room for public spirit and public pride.

Such a situation is pregnant with mischievous results. The clerical manager is not always proof against the demoralising influence of power as absolute as it is petty. The Nonconformists harbour an inevitable resentment against an institution in which they suspect that their religious sympathies will not always be respected.¹ It often happens that the schoolmaster is called upon to undertake duties which are foreign to his office, and compelled to adapt his political sentiments to those of the rector. Indeed, the position of the teacher, who receives an inadequate salary and little consideration, is one of the gravest abuses of the Voluntary system.

¹ "We agree with the Rev. W. J. B. Richards, Roman Catholic Inspector of Schools, that the Conscience Clause is not much use as a protection. We think that it is in the management of the school and in the appointment of the teachers that the true securities for fair play and freedom from the danger of proselytism are to be found."—Royal Commission, 1888: "Minority Report," p. 363.

Energies and abilities which might be devoted to the public service are exhausted in a bitter, internecine feud. There is a genuine sense of injustice, which revolts in the villages, as it does elsewhere, from the exclusive enjoyment of public authority by a private and irresponsible person. The rector *ex officio* becomes the measure of all things.

The extension of democratic self-government has substituted popular for privileged control in almost every branch of local administration. The English citizen may sometimes grumble at the extent of his local burdens, but he has at least the satisfaction of knowing that his contributions and his interests are in the care of a popular and responsible Board, and not, as in Ireland (the country to which one turns for illustrations of injustice), administered by private bodies over which he has no control, such as a Grand Jury nominated by the Sheriff for the county. In Great Britain, if we except the licensing of the distributors of drink and knowledge, it is true of almost every public local interest that it is under public local control. Education, which yields in importance to no other of these interests, is in the majority of villages still in the hands of private bodies. The Voluntary school draws its income mainly from public funds, and its scholars from the children of a public compelled by law to send them to that school. So long as its management continues to be private, it occupies a unique

position amongst local institutions. Here "taxation without representation,"¹ that major premise of political injustice, is still maintaining itself.

This fortress of the private administration of public institutions must be assailed by Liberals with a ceaseless, unflagging vigour. Opportunities there have been for firm and determined action; but our hands have been idle, and almost the first efforts of a powerful Tory Government have been directed to perpetuating the injustice. A Liberal Government in 1870 gave its countenance to this abuse, and the march of progress to democratic self-government has left it unremedied. That compromise on a first principle is fatal to any political success is clear from the paralysis which has numbed our energies; from the hesitating, almost inarticulate, character of our declarations; from the hopeless spectacle of a party which has not dared to lift a hand to redress this wrong, and has vindicated its inaction in the name of a truce which rather resembled a surrender.²

To break up this odious monopoly, to release the villages from an irritating despotism, to give life and scope to public activity—these are worthy objects of

¹ It is scarcely worth while to notice the ridiculous subterfuge that the supervision of the Department—extending merely to observance of a code—amounts to control by the taxpayers.

² Cf. the monstrous paradox that the State should supplement, not supplant, the efforts of Voluntary societies which has confronted us since 1870.

a Liberal effort which should be none the less determined because it is tardy.

When this private control has been abolished, the question of religious instruction will be open for discussion. There is no necessary antagonism between Liberal principles and differential dogmatic teaching, under proper conditions and with definite safeguards.

Definite religious teaching has so long been associated with a hateful and intolerable system that it comes into court under a stigma. But I venture to think that the most hopeful solution of a controversy which has gone near to bringing the very name of religion into contempt will be found in some scheme admitting of denominational education in all schools, and private control in none.

A scheme could be devised by which, at a stated time in each school, teachers selected by the various denominations in each locality should give instruction to the children of their several denominations in religion, and, if necessary, in history.

If this instruction were not a gratuitous service on the part of the teachers, the cost of their remuneration would, of course, fall upon their own religious societies.

None of the objections attaching to the present system could be urged against such a scheme. The State would not pay for religious instruction, which would be given at the expense of the denominations. The teachers would not be subject to religious tests,

for they would only teach—or necessarily teach—secular subjects; whilst the effective public control of all schools, unlike the ineffective Conscience Clause, would safeguard the system against the abuses of sectarian spirit. But the essential preliminary to the consideration of any such scheme (a return, by the way, to the policy of many good Liberals in the past) is the establishment of an effective public control over all the schools.

We might then hope to see, what we have never yet seen in England,¹ a genuine co-operation on all sides in the work of education, liberated from the distractions of conflicting interests.² We should satisfy the sense of justice of a minority which cannot accept undenominational religion and believes that moral teaching can only be given with certain definite metaphysical sanctions. We should escape from the shifting quicksands of an illogical compromise (to which we have sacrificed the freedom of more than half the schools) to the firm rock of a reasoned and intelligible system.

But the Liberal view of education demands more than a readjustment of existing irregularities. The agitation which has been excited by the Education Bill may well be turned to account by directing

¹ Note the striking contrast in this respect between England and Scotland, where, of course, there is universal popular control.

² What can be more revolting than the treachery of men who take office on a Board with the deliberate purpose of obstructing its work?

attention to other details in which there is urgent need for a more active and more generous policy.

There is, first of all, the question of the age limit. The Education Bill of last session proposed that twelve should be substituted for eleven as the age at which children may work half-time. An amendment of the education law is required on two grounds. In the first place, not only does the withdrawal of children from school at an early age under any circumstances involve considerable educational waste, but steady attendance at school till a later age is, in particular, the necessary condition of an effective use of the facilities for technical education. The veriest rustic recognises the folly of working a horse when it is too young. If the question be restricted solely to economic considerations, it is an equally short-sighted policy to allow children to be taken away from school and sent to work at an early age. England suffers, and deserves to suffer, in competition with other countries for the early age at which her children leave school.

There is another question closely allied with the last—that of attendance at evening schools. The growth of these schools, and the encouragement which they have received by a special code from the Education Department, have done a great deal towards rescuing education from the charge of ineffectiveness. The evening schools conducted by some of the large School Boards are among the most valuable of their

great services to education. Boys and girls who would otherwise have lost the benefit of the instruction gained in the day school have been enabled to add to their store of learning, and to grasp some of the principles of the industries in which they are engaged. It would increase the value of these schools very considerably if attendance were made compulsory up to a certain age. The experiment has been tried with marked success by a large firm of alkali manufacturers,¹ who make it a condition of employment in their service that boys up to the age of seventeen must attend an evening school. Nor is the compulsory clause regarded as a hardship by the boys, for they have come to recognise the advantages of the system. The effect of making such attendance compulsory is to protect a man from the consequences of a merely temporary dislike of book-work during his boyhood, at an age when he could not be regarded as a competent judge of his own interests.

There is much still to be done within the province of elementary education. But technical and higher education are in a far more unsatisfactory condition. It is only during recent years that serious attention has been given at all widely in this country to these important questions. The Science and Art Department was till 1890 the sole public authority which was able to give financial assistance to the teaching of technical subjects. The County Councils have in

¹ Messrs. Brunner, Mond & Co., Northwich.

many cases done admirable work during the last six years by turning to good account the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act of 1890. The Technical Instruction Committees, for example, of Cheshire, Surrey, and the West Riding of Yorkshire have constructed educational systems which are already producing very striking results.

The importance of improving our facilities for technical instruction, to enable English industries to meet foreign competition, is now happily receiving wider recognition, and the prejudice against substituting the methods of science for the *traditions of age* is succumbing before the logic of hard fact. It is now acknowledged that the sting of Continental competition lies in the Continental school. This is true in particular of one great industry, to which attention has been directed for some time. Agricultural depression is the theme of discussion at every rent audit dinner, where the country squire joins with the overrented tenant in paying a lugubrious homage to the broken idol of Protection. Conservative promises to help the agriculturist, as lavish as they were indefinite, were scattered throughout the constituencies during the late election. The legislation of last Session indicates the spirit in which they are to be carried into effect. Liberals recognise as readily as the opposite party the evils of agricultural depression, but they do not find in an Agricultural Land Rating Act the salvation of agriculture, and they look

askance at the Protective policy which Conservatives are now trying to galvanise into life. The future of agriculture rests largely with the agriculturists themselves. It should be the policy of the friends of agriculture to remove the restrictions which hamper the enterprise of the farmer, and to help him to make the most effective use of his skill and intelligence, the only weapons on which he can rely in the struggle. Such a policy suggests two courses of action. An antiquated system of land tenure must be amended to give the tenant greater freedom and greater security, and agricultural education must be more widely distributed.

It is with the latter policy that I am concerned. The Cheshire County Council has lately established an agricultural school, and it is to be earnestly hoped that this example will be generally followed. The value of these institutions is illustrated by the information given in the Report of Mr. Plunkett's Recess Committee.

We learn from this Report that there has been a regular system of agricultural education in France since 1848, and that Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Bavaria, and Hungary have, one and all, well-organised systems of agricultural schools. The influence of such training upon the skill and resourcefulness of the agriculturist is well seen in the history of Danish farming. The trade in butter, for which Denmark is famous, has grown up within the last

twenty years, and the trade in bacon within the last eight years. During the last generation Denmark has been successfully converted from a corn-growing to a dairying and stock-raising country.

Technical instruction is likewise provided for in these countries on a generous and elaborate system. The Report of Mr. Plunkett's Committee gives some interesting information with regard to Würtemberg.¹

"Forty years ago, Würtemberg," in the words of the man who had most to do with its subsequent uplifting, "was purely agricultural and impoverished by over-population." Its condition was then described as "deplorable." To-day it is one of the most thriving hives of manufacturing industry on the Continent, and the British Minister at Stuttgart is able to report as follows:—

"England now buys from Würtemberg blankets, carpets, flannels, hosiery, linens, tissues, instruments, types, drugs, chemicals, paper, ivory goods, wood-carving, toys, furniture, hats, pianos, gunpowder, clothes and stays. The manufacture of gunpowder, once pre-eminently English, is now a speciality of Würtemberg, and the Rottweil Mills have attained such celebrity that they supply powder for artillery and blasting to Bavaria, Russia, Holland, England, and Servia. A manufacture of small arms has also obtained a footing, the Mauser factory being now famous all over the world for its repeating rifles."

¹ Pp. 57-58.

To-day, as the Director of the Royal Bank at Stuttgart told Mr. Mulhall, "there is not a pauper in the Kingdom of Würtemberg." In the midst of the depression of trade and industry which affected all Europe in 1886, the British Minister had to report to his Government that "the prosperity of the nation and well-being of the masses have suffered no interruption. No real depression exists here."

The Report proceeds to describe the methods adopted by the Central-Stelle or Board of Industries for the distribution of trade information, and then passes on to an account of the very elaborate system of technical instruction which obtains in the country.

It is mainly to the enterprise and judgment of the County Councils that we must look for the extension of agricultural and technical teaching in its more elementary stages. But the Provincial Colleges render admirable service in the provision of special training, and they are in urgent need of increased State assistance. A deputation waited upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn of 1895 to request that the grant of £15,000 a year to these colleges should be doubled, but that request has, unfortunately, not yet been granted. The result of a generous provision for this object upon the productive power of the nation would be enormous, for it is impossible to ignore the influence of technical education upon trade, or the important part which it has played in building up industries in other countries. If the industrial

revolution means, as it ought to mean, the substitution of scientific principles for empirical methods, technical training is becoming more and more necessary.

The true friend of British commerce is not the man who attempts to restrict the national view of Empire to the advantages of its markets, but the man who seeks to arm British industry with the only weapon by which foreign competition can be successfully confronted.

Moreover, such a policy would do much towards adding dignity and freedom to the status of the employed. Education does not merely increase the productivity of labour. It helps to release the mind of the skilled labourer from the brute tyranny of a machinery to which he ministers, but which he otherwise does not understand. It is only by education that men become active¹ and sympathetic members of an industrial society. Without it, their service is too often only a mechanical process in an unintelligible system. To educate the wage-earner is to make industry more human. But technical education does not merely substitute the freedom of a reasoning and self-conscious co-operation for the slavery of a service unthinking and untaught ; it also furthers another Liberal ideal. It helps to equalise

¹ Note the emphasis laid on education by the Society for Promoting Co-operative Production. Education is a necessary condition of the achievement of the splendid ideal of this society. The efficiency of the school has contributed, with other obvious causes, to the growth of the movement in France.

the status of employer and employed. It is an important factor in securing a genuine, and not a fictitious, freedom of contract by an equitable distribution of those advantages which wealth otherwise secures to one only of the parties to the negotiation. The mutual respect of employers and employed is indispensable to satisfactory industrial relations,¹ and it can only be secured by a wider distribution of education throughout the industrial community.

Secondary education is in a still more inchoate condition. The supply of such schools is hopelessly inadequate.² The important part which they play in the making of citizens is obvious enough, and must not be overlooked from a tendency to regard education solely as an immediate preparation for a career in a particular industry. It is interesting also

¹ Technical instruction in Switzerland :—"Here, as in Belgium and elsewhere, the authorities consider that it is little use to teach children reading, writing, and arithmetic, unless you undertake to carry on their education in the practical duties of life, and make them good members of society. So thoroughly is this principle adhered to, that the ordinary artisan is often on the same intellectual level as his employer, and it has been observed by an English writer that 'Where master and operative are both educated men, as in Switzerland, they seem to get on better, because, in a manner, on a footing of equality.'"—Report of Mr. Plunkett's Recess Committee.

² "It must be observed, however, that endowed schools, whether good or bad, afford very inadequate provision for the secondary education of the whole country. The total number of scholars in the endowed schools in the selected counties, even when we include non-local schools, such as Rugby and Charterhouse, amounts only to 21,878, or 2·5 per thousand of the population."—Report of Secondary Education Commission, p. 48.

to observe that the skill and capacity of the Danish farmer is in part attributed in Mr. Plunkett's Report to the training in history, literature, and language in the rural High Schools, the other factor being the distribution of land amongst small freeholders.

Organisation, such as the creation of one central and many local authorities, suggested by the Secondary Education Commission, is urgently required to bring existing agencies into some systematic relation, to make the best use of existing endowments and, by means of scholarships, to place good schools within reach of every boy of ability. But to combine with any proposals a stipulation that no rate shall be levied beyond the limit provided by the Technical Instruction Act, as was done in the Education Bill of last Session, is enormously to discount at the outset the value of such organisation. To bring technical and higher instruction within the reach of every boy and girl who is competent to take advantage of it, is an object which justifies a generous expenditure of public money.

But the foundation stone upon which this superstructure of educational machinery is to be built is the Primary School. Any weakness in Elementary Education vitiates the whole system, and renders nugatory the whole policy. Sir John Gorst¹ has pointed out that the efforts of some of the County Council Technical Instruction Committees have been

¹ *North American Review*, October, 1896, p. 435.

frustrated, because ignorance of elementary subjects incapacitated the children of the peasantry from taking advantage of technical classes. Higher education implies a certain standard of knowledge, and it is idle to attempt to teach, for instance, the principles of agriculture to a boy who has not grasped the elements of arithmetic.

If primary instruction does not develop the reasoning faculty, education will go no further. Thus the argument comes back in a circle to the Elementary School. *Hic fons et origo mali.*

I have claimed for education that it is an indispensable condition of freedom. For this reason those who are the friends of a monopoly of activity, whether in politics or in any other sphere of human effort, discourage its progress, and gladly avail themselves of the pretext of economy to restrict its distribution. It is in virtue of this quality that the cause of education is sacred to Liberals.

They recognise in it their chief ally in their endeavour to make Government more democratic, citizenship more real, and national life more self-conscious. They do not fear to submit the issues of an hereditary chamber and decentralised administration to an educated tribunal, and they have no reason to shrink from an educated judgment upon the questions of local taxation and land law reform. They have no motive for keeping the electors stupid.

It is a political axiom of Liberal philosophy that the good, or the activity, or the character, which the State should promote is the good of the whole people, and not that of a particular class. The ideals of Liberal policy, inspired by this principle, are concerned alike with the abstract form and the practical results of Government. It is only under democratic conditions that the political institutions of a country will at once express and foster the character and the activity of the whole people. This doctrine of faith compels the demand for self-government for Ireland and the denial of the arrogant claim of an hereditary chamber to legislative authority. Liberal principles find expression again in the attempt to reform systems of land tenure and land taxation which operate to the advantage of a class and to the prejudice of the community at large, and also in the endeavour to minimise the disabilities and the limitations of poverty by adjusting the incidence of public burdens and regulating the conditions of employment.

But the demand that our schools shall be efficient, and that they shall be the public instruments of a popular authority, rather than the private weapons of a sectarian party, finds its place in a policy which seeks to give scope and effect to the free play of personal character and individual choice. It is because education is so momentous in its results on character that we dare not trust its direction to any but a public and popular authority, least of all to

men who can forget the claims of citizenship, even if it be in obedience to the dictates of a Church. No influence has the power of education to foster or to starve the civic spirit, to nurture or to poison the enthusiasms of a democracy. For it is in the school that you begin to mould the character and the opinions of your citizens who will one day make their choice between true principles of Empire and Government and the false ideals of men who wish the State to suppress rather than to express the character of its citizens, or who honour empire not as the sacred trust to preserve, but as a brute force to destroy the liberties of nations. If the surface be ill-prepared, you may stamp upon it impressions of civic freedom and civic duty, and they will not survive to-morrow ; order well your groundwork, and you need not fear that even the potent lye of material interest will wash out the fast-dyed print of reverence for free and equal law.

J. LAWRENCE HAMMOND.

HISTORIC BASIS OF LIBERALISM.

Parliament established by Revolution of 1688—Extinction of Yeomen—Deadness of National Life—Peasantry deliberately pauperised—French Revolution assists Reforming Impulse for the Moment—Soon stifled by Dominant Class—Which resists all Reform, even after 1815—Liberal Party gathers Strength—First Reform Bill at last carried—The Poor Law—Free Trade Movement—1848, and Ireland—Progress slackens, 1850-1865—Lord Palmerston, at Home—and Abroad—Followed by Mr. Gladstone—Disraeli and his Ministry—The Berlin Treaty—Evil Effects of, till Present Day—Mr. Gladstone's Second Cabinet—Third Reform Bill—Mr. Gladstone accepts Home Rule—The Split: its Meaning—Home Rule rejected—Appearance of Labour Question—Strikes and Riots—The Education Election of 1892—Home Rule again—Rejected by the Lords—Retirement of Mr. Gladstone—1895, the Great Defeat—Dalliance with Collectivism—Back to the Earlier Ideal—The Promises of Socialism—Its Materialist Aims—"The City of Pigs"—Liberalism *v.* False Ideals—A Leader?—The Battle before us.

IN the Revolution of 1688 the English people changed masters. For the authority of the king there was substituted the authority of the Houses of Parliament. Throughout the eighteenth century the power of this body existed unquestioned as the self-sufficing means of government. It did everything: it displaced ministers, made laws and dictated the national policy in war and peace, and it did all this without assistance from the nation at large. Parliament stood by itself, independent and isolated.

In describing the Revolutions of 1688 and 1714 we are wont to say that they established

Parliamentary government; the word "established" is well chosen. The Constitution was an end in itself, and it never crossed the minds of the statesmen of the early Georges that something more was needed to complete the national greatness than an elaborate system of "checks and balances" whereby the Crown could live in harmony with the Parliamentary Estates. In none of the great documents of the time will you find the suggestion that the people should share in the work of government. The makers of the Revolution were content with the Constitution as it then existed. They never dreamed of providing any means for the removal of those defects, which would inevitably appear.

It is to the composition of the House of Commons itself that we must look if we would understand how far was the people from a share in government. Broadly speaking, the Commons were all members of the aristocratic class, separated from the actual peerage by but a narrow barrier.¹ They were squires and great landowners—often cadets of a great Whig house; the merchant element was only scantily

¹ I need hardly remind readers that the House of Commons differs from Assemblies of the Third Estate in other countries, in that, from the very first, it contained members of the *noblesse*. Abroad, the noble, however poor, was sharply divided from the burgher and the peasant. The "Knights of the Shire," who had won many constitutional victories in the Middle Ages, retained their power too long, and became, in the eighteenth century, a close, selfish oligarchy. On this point, see any constitutional history—best of all, Boutmy, *Developpement de la Constitution Anglaise*, translated.

represented. And the landowners had just passed a statute tending directly to preserve their political powers and privileges by imposing a property qualification of £300 a year for the borough and £600 a year for the county members of Parliament. To get the modern value of these sums we must multiply by more than two. As this qualification was to be derived from real property, town and county alike were represented by members of the territorial class. Only from their ranks could members of Parliament be chosen.

Over these members the constituencies had little or no control. The qualification for the county franchise was fixed by an Act of 1430 at a freehold of 40s. per annum. Though this entirely cut out the copyholders, leaseholders, and tenants at will—an increasing class—it did not set up a very high test, especially when we consider the great fall in the value of money that had taken place during the past three centuries. The freeholders were the strength of the country during the seventeenth century, and remained fairly numerous down to 1760. But after that date their numbers—already on the decline—go down with alarming and extraordinary rapidity. By the end of the Napoleonic wars the class has ceased to exist. Nor can we attribute the change solely to the pressure of economic conditions. Improved methods of agriculture had doubtless much to do with their disappearance; they could not

compete with the great capitalist landowner. The growth of the towns struck at their cottage industries, and also provided them with a refuge whither they might retreat when driven off the land. But after allowing for all these considerations, it is impossible to acquit the squirearchy of a deliberate and conscious attempt to get rid of the yeomen and force them to sell their lands. In a thousand ways, by curtailing their rights of sport, by legal chicanery, by constant pressure, and sometimes by open theft, the position of the yeoman was made unbearable. He sold his acres, and the country knew him no more. There were left in the villages few but the labourers and tenants at will. How the squires and justices of the peace dealt with them will be shown later.

But if the independence of rural England was thus gone, what was the condition of the towns, where the territorial class had no footing? The spirit of civic life was utterly dead. The corporations had long been close oligarchies, jealous of all outside their pale. The municipal franchise belonged to a minute section of the inhabitants, wherever the corporations were not filled up by co-optation. In the hands of the corporation lay the whole government of the town, and in many cases the election of the members of Parliament. A large town electorate was utterly unknown in any borough in England. But a seat in Parliament was eagerly coveted. It was this small body, of perhaps twenty or thirty men

at the outside, who controlled the representation. Besieged on every side by wealthy landowners with political ambitions, who can wonder that they gave way to temptation, and allowed themselves to be bought and sold as readily and as many times over as Government stock on a rising market? Few institutions were ever less representative or more corrupt than the English boroughs of the eighteenth century—save, perhaps, the dominant class, the cause of their corruption. As for the growing towns of the Midlands and north-west, they were generally without representation at all; but this anomaly only became glaringly apparent towards the end of the century. The rotten boroughs with which England abounded were a feature of the Constitution too famous to require denunciation here; but since they have been sometimes praised as providing “a covered way” for introducing young men of more ability than wealth into public life, it may suffice to point out that they brought in ten men like George Selwyn or Bubb Doddington for one like William Pitt.

With such a system, one is not surprised to learn that in 1780 some six thousand men returned an absolute majority of the House of Commons.

The institutions which should have given light and teaching to the people—the Church and the Universities—were slothful and stagnant. Careless of its higher duties, the Church was oppressive to those without its pale; the Test and Corporation

Acts were still in force as mementoes of persecution yet recent. Their provisions, it is true, were evaded, but they remained on the Statute Book, to remind all Dissenters that their very existence was on sufferance. Cabinets had long been accustomed to use the Church as a convenient field of patronage. Bishoprics and Deaneries were filled up on party lines, to serve party ends. The rector was a hard-riding country gentleman, neither worse nor better than the other Squire Westerns around him. The Universities were closed to all but Churchmen, and as places of learning were negligible quantities.

Nor were symptoms of deadness wanting in the religious bodies outside the Established Church. The religious fervour of Puritanism, with its great faults and its splendid triumphs, was extinct. Only through Wesley and Whitfield was a certain amount of spiritual life at last infused into the mass of the nation.

England, therefore, was wanting in the very rudiments of political freedom. The people were brutalised by the materialist rule of classes who lived on their political privileges : they were soon to be pauperised also.

It is not my intention to go through the events that lie between 1760 and the first Reform Bill in any detail. But there is one great page in English social history, to pass over which would be to misunderstand the whole of the Liberal movement. I mean, the

"Speenhamland Act" of 1795, and its consequences. What that "Act" was is well known. The justices of the peace of Berkshire met and passed resolutions on the state of the peasantry. The wages of the labourer were insufficient to support life if corn continued dear. Whenever, therefore, the gallon loaf rose to 1s., the labourer was to have 3s. a week allowed him. This allowance was to be made up out of the rates! As the labourer rarely makes a childless marriage, something must be done for the beings he brings into the world. Therefore a further provision of 1s. 6d. a week must be made for every child born to the labourer. This precedent was adopted all over England—supplementary grants out of the rates. What resulted might have been predicted in every detail. All motive for thrift was taken away; the labourer did as little work as might be, knowing that the rates would prevent him from starving. He married and begot recklessly—the rates came to his aid again. By 1819 one-fifth of the population of England were paupers. This was the system in action. But the causes which lay behind were no more purely economic than they had been in the case of the yeomen. As before, we can trace the conscious policy of the landed classes. They had eliminated from rural England all save the wage-earners. Acts of Settlement had put the wage-earners under the authority of the territorial caste. To maintain this authority a little

longer, and to drive the labourer into veritable serfdom, it was necessary that the landlord should procure for him a bare subsistence. Only by preventing wholesale starvation could they save themselves, their power, and their privileges. The hopeless condition of rural England after the Great War is one count in the long indictment which can be framed against the landed gentry as a ruling class.

To sum up : the latter half of the eighteenth century shows us a close oligarchy tending to become ever closer ; towns without freedom or healthy life ; a peasantry pauperised, debased, and almost without hope. To right these wrongs was an imperative necessity, and as a result the Liberal movement early acquired, and has never quite lost, the character of an attack on privilege, on oligarchy, on caste—on everything, in short, which derogates from the dignity and freedom of the individual man. The attack must be based on principles ; freedom and equality must be put first and foremost as the basis of the nation's very existence.

To this England there comes the first news of the French Revolution. Political rights, long dormant, are reasserted in France in a highly abstract form. Social injustice of long duration is swept away in a highly practical, concrete form. All Europe stands round expectant and interested. In England the Revolution is hailed with joy. Ever since the days

of Wilkes there had been a small, able, and determined section of men clamouring for wide reforms in the State. In Fox the country possessed an orator of immense power, ardently attached to progress and to Liberal—nay, Radical—ideas. Pitt,¹ the Premier, a disciple of Adam Smith, was a believer in Parliamentary and economic reform; and though he had several times failed to convert Parliament to his views, he had yet good hope of ultimate success. There was a stirring in the minds of men and an impulse towards a larger and truer national life. The General Election of 1784 had got rid of the worst political corruption—as, who should say, an earnest of better things ere long.

The events in France urged men on. Fox declared the Revolution the greatest and best thing the world had yet seen. Everywhere advanced thinkers formed themselves into societies for the furtherance of Reform. They held meetings and published manifestoes, and kept up communication with some at least of the Revolutionary leaders across the Channel. But amidst all this ardent hope and passionate expectation appeared one hostile sign—the writings of Burke. Burke is one of those extraordinary contradictions which could only have been produced in England. He was an almost fanatical believer in justice and good government, and his sympathies went beyond his own country; they embraced

¹ Pitt called himself a Whig to the end of his life.

humanity at large. But he was passionately attached to the order of things as then existing. He fondled error and fostered paradox until he came to be the defender of rotten boroughs and close corporations. His "Reflections on the French Revolution" had probably a greater influence on English history than any other pamphlet or piece of writing. They marked a turn in the tide; then came the September Massacres and the execution of the king. A cry of horror arose in England, and Burke's voice rose higher. "This," men cried, "is the end of Reform! Are *we*, too, to drift to the same end—the same excesses?" The propertied classes, the Church, everyone who had anything to lose, declaimed against the Revolution, and the cause of Reform was postponed for forty years.

Henceforward anyone who dared breathe a word of change was held for a Jacobin. Indeed, there arose in England a White Terror. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, numerous statutes were passed against any who should make a society or publish a book for any purpose which the judges might twist into sedition. Thus we have that celebrated series of trials in Scotland which form Lord Braxfield's best claim to the affection of his countrymen.¹ But though no man dared open his lips, the discontent and misery were there. Riots, arson, rick-burnings, were numerous,

¹ R. L. Stevenson has pictured Braxfield to us in his "Weir of Hermiston." Chap. iii. of that book gives a specimen of his demeanour on the bench.

even with the Frenchmen at our very doors ; and it was probably the knowledge of the profound disaffection of many among the working classes which induced Napoleon to think of invading England. The Great War came to an end in 1815. Those who before spoke no word for fear of seeming unpatriotic or disloyal were now at liberty to take up once more the question of Reform. The Tory party, however, all-powerful during the war, had no intention of yielding their position simply because Napoleon and the Revolution had disappeared. They would rule England in the future as in the past, for their own benefit. The power of privilege and territorialism was to be no whit weakened. Englishmen of this age would find it hard to realise how utterly degraded were the ideals of their countrymen during the years which followed 1815. The territorial class had acquired a military flavour, and the insolent, debauched officer who had "vanquished the French," became the darling of English society.¹ He had a profound contempt for the civilian, and an arrogance towards the plebeian which has rarely been paralleled. This caricature of an aristocracy possessed a worthy head—the Regent, afterwards George IV., who very nearly succeeded in making the working people hate the name and idea of monarch altogether.

¹ Thackeray, upon whom the times of George IV. had exercised a deep influence, has supplied us with many admirable instances of this class—more especially in the "Book of Snobs." Possibly, Englishmen who have lived in the Berlin of to-day could supply a parallel.

The want and misery of the people increased steadily. The Government was perfectly sure of itself, and passed the Six Acts of 1819, with a view to stifling all public opinion whatsoever. Only by leave of a magistrate could public meetings be held at all, and newspapers were subjected to a merciless censorship. The most peaceful gathering was liable to a dispersal by the military, followed by indictments for treason. Thus we have the Peterloo massacre and the trials in Scotland of Hardie and Baird.

The years 1819-1824 are among the darkest in our history. To a proper comprehension of the period which follows, some insight is necessary into the character of the men who made the Reform Bill of 1832. It is natural, almost inevitable, that when new conditions arise the men who fought the battle of freedom in the past should be sneered at as "Whiggish" and out of date. So they are in this year of grace 1897. But that does not alter the fact that the work they did was herculean—comparable in greatness to that of the Long Parliament in the summer of 1641. Other needs have arisen; we have other problems to face. Their battle-cries are antiquated. But we may be able to show subsequently that there were principles underlying their work that are applicable not to one time, to one crisis, only.

There were the men inside Parliament, and it was with them that the details of the fighting lay. Lord

Grey, Lord Althorp, Lord John Russell, Palmerston, Thomas Babington Macaulay—these are names well known to everyone still. They were men of very diverse power, and of various sympathies. Lord Althorp was an aristocrat of intelligence and integrity, but an aristocrat still. Lord Grey had intense convictions and an unshaken belief in the people, but neither he nor Macaulay looked beyond the middle class.

Far more remarkable were the men outside Parliament, who were the inspirers and prophets of the movement. Cobbett had a rude, pungent mother-wit, and the boundless common-sense which is almost originality. His is the genius of the people, that detests shams and sees life from the under-side, without the gilding. Bentham was the man who had lived in the existing order, had been nourished and trained therein, and who had gradually risen to a feeling of its innate rottenness. His was one of the clearest intellects that the eighteenth century, so fruitful in that type of mind, produced. He holds fast to abstract principles to guide him through the mass of sophistries that surround him. Sciolists and *petits-maîtres* pick holes in his doctrines at their pleasure,¹ but the broad rule that government must be by the people for the people has never been shaken. James Mill has been almost merged and lost in the fame of his greater son, but, as editor of

¹ Cp. Raleigh, "Elementary Politics," chap. viii.

the *Examiner*, and afterwards of the *Westminster Review*, he was a powerful assistance to the doctrines of 1830. He was in close union and sympathy with Ricardo and McCulloch, as well as with Bentham. His mind, if somewhat arid and unimaginative, was strong and precise.

These, then, were the foremost writers and thinkers of the time, and they unhesitatingly put themselves at the disposal of the popular hopes. They did not, like many in later times, lend their intellect and power of expression to the existing order, and seek by clever sophistries to bolster up privilege and outworn authority.

And now, in 1827, the great wave of reform began to sweep over the country. The Liberals started by attacking the more glaring and indefensible abuses which loaded the Statute Book: the Test and Corporation Acts, which had ceased to persecute but not to annoy, were at last swept away. Nonconformists could at length enter upon the heritage of which they had been deprived for a century and a half. In 1829 the Roman Catholic disabilities were removed; though, with that insanity which marks most English dealings with Ireland, the benefit was somewhat neutralised by raising the franchise qualification in the sister island. At length, in 1830, Parliamentary Reform becomes the one and only question of the day.

Into the long story of that struggle I need not

enter in detail. It will suffice to point out that the Reform Bill was met by the most determined and embittered opposition from the vast majority of the landowners. The Duke of Wellington roundly declared (shortly after the accession of William IV.) that Parliament possessed, and deserved to possess, the fullest confidence of the country. The Universities were shrill in their condemnation of this wicked and revolutionary measure. The aristocracy was aghast, the king openly hostile. Living at a time when the force of aristocratic displeasure has been largely minimised, we can hardly understand the courage required from any member of the upper classes who sought to forward the Reform Bill. Scarcely less remarkable than the vigour of the opposition was the extraordinary forbearance displayed by the nation as a whole. I am not ignorant that there were riots in many parts of England, that Nottingham Castle was burned over the head of the owner who would "do what he liked with his own," that Bristol was for several days in a state of anarchy. But when we consider the extraordinary provocation which the nation had suffered, the long oppression, insolence, and injustice it had undergone from the ruling class, the landowners—when we remember Peterloo and the Six Acts—we shall applaud the moderation of our countrymen. Let us bear in mind the behaviour of the men of Birmingham, led by Thomas Attwood, a worthy forerunner of John Bright. He and his

colleagues were at the head of an organisation to be numbered by the ten thousand. All were of one mind, all passionately eager for reform. They had announced their intention of marching to London *en masse* if the Lords did not bow to their just demands. But not a weapon was raised ; and if the march had taken place, it would have been that of a law-abiding, peaceful army, bent on gaining the liberty that was theirs, but not by the red hand of revolution.

The first Reform Bill did not give power to the people as a whole. It benefited the middle class only ; it added but half a million names to the electorate. As a document, it bears traces of compromise, even of partiality ; but to the spirit in which it was conceived full justice must be done. The opposition was envenomed and unscrupulous, and it was only by doing less than they wished that the Reformers could accomplish anything at all. Earl Grey and his followers said plainly that the Bill was but a portion of the wider justice that should be in the future. Even the "Finality" speech of Lord John Russell does not really imply that he regarded the Reform Bill as perfection. Moreover, as we have said, there were behind the leaders in Parliament a body of men whose ideals were thorough and consistent, and who did not allow the Liberals to stagnate after their first success. The virile minds of Bentham and James Mill understood and proclaimed

the sovereignty of the people ; and, moreover, they indicated with amazing clearness the method whereby internal and social reform should be carried into effect.

Bentham lived just long enough to see the Reform Bill carried into effect. James Mill passed on the mantle to his yet greater son. Grote was to be for many years a pillar of philosophic Liberalism. But if any proof were needed that the men of 1832 were no mere timid "Whigs" intent on their own privileges, it would be found in the torrent of remedial legislation which marked the next few years. First and greatest of all stands the Poor Law Reform of 1834. We have mentioned the "Speenhamland Act," and have alluded to the enormous evils it inflicted on the labourers. The evil had no whit abated. The rates were enormous, the land was in some places going out of cultivation, the condition of the agricultural labourer was miserable beyond words. Yet, thanks to the Corn Laws, rents were high, and the squires were in full enjoyment of what was, in relation to the misery of other classes, the fattest prosperity. The system of socialism under which the labourer lived was complete. All thrift and industry, every quality which goes to the making of a citizen, was taken from him—"he was an artificial creation, not a natural product of the race."

At one blow the whole fabric was swept away. The workhouse test was imposed. Outdoor relief was

limited ; indeed, if the commissioners had prevailed, it would have been entirely done away with. Once again the individual was called upon to struggle for himself, not to look for support from the community. The Poor Laws of the past forty years had been an interesting socialistic experiment, and an admirable lesson for succeeding generations. The clear and resolute ideas of the Liberal thinkers had triumphed over prejudice and mistaken philanthropy.

At the same time that this great reform was passed something was done to remedy the abuses of the Irish Church and the tithe question. Slavery was finally abolished, and public money was at last devoted to education, one of the most patent needs of the country. The town corporations were reformed, and town government put upon a more popular and representative basis. It would take up too much space to enumerate all the reforms effected during the years which followed 1832.

But the condition of England was still unhappy in the extreme. Bread was enormously dear—an artificial monopoly created for the benefit of the landowners. There was much want and discontent ; the evil effects of half a century of Tory government were not so easily got rid of. About 1840 came the Chartist agitation. The charter was a demand for universal suffrage, annual Parliaments, and the ballot. It was a natural result of the miseries of the time. It will be seen that its provisions have by no means

been fully carried into law. As to annual Parliaments, this cry seems to have disappeared. For some occult reason, the mystic number seven (in practice, six) years, seems to work satisfactorily as the limit to a Parliament's duration. Whether the Septennial Act will remain on the Statute Book for ever is doubtful; but, at any rate, little agitation against it can be seen at the present day. Universal manhood suffrage, however, is a more important matter. "One man one vote" is an all-important but still unfulfilled item of the traditional Liberal programme. We are still some distance from its fulfilment, and the road thither has been one of difficulty. But assuredly that has been no fault of the Liberal party.

After the year 1841 the Corn Laws became the question of the day. The population was increasing fast. The amount of corn the country could produce was necessarily limited, and, as foreign wheat was jealously kept out, it was difficult to feed the population. It became absolutely necessary that the duties on the import of corn should be done away with. At this great crisis men were found of consummate courage and strength for the fight. One of them, the Hon. Charles Villiers, is among us to this day, the last survivor of a great band, and the first member of the House of Commons to advocate complete Free Trade; but, without in any way disparaging the sterling work he did, it will be readily admitted that to two other

men belongs the chief glory—to John Bright and Richard Cobden. They did incalculable good to England, and they are two of the best examples of the Liberal mind that could well be found. When Sir Robert Peel accepted and carried through the principle of Free Trade, he frankly admitted that the credit both for his own conversion and for that of the country was due to “the unadorned eloquence of Richard Cobden.” That great thinker took his stand on broad, logical grounds. He gave up time, and money to the cause in which he believed, and it was his unflinching energy that made England a free-trading country.

Of John Bright it is hard to say anything which would not sound the merest commonplace. He embodied some of the best qualities of the race. His eloquence moved men to the depths of their nature because it was instinct with the loftiest purpose, with that moral seriousness which is conspicuous in the English character even to excess. But no trace of cant marked the words and thoughts of John Bright. Everything he said came from the very heart of the man.

His Liberalism was a creed that appealed to everything that was noble in humanity; it was animated by great ideals; it had no hint of opportunism, of materialism. It may not be amiss to quote a few of his words to show the spirit which animated John Bright. Speaking in favour of Free

Trade in Covent Garden Theatre on December 19th, 1845, "It is a struggle," he said, "between the numbers, wealth, comforts—the all, in fact—of the middle and industrious classes, and the wealth, the union, and sordidness of a large section of the aristocracy of this empire; and we have to decide . . . now in this great struggle, whether in this land in which we live, we will longer bear the wicked legislation to which we have been subjected, or whether we will make one effort to right the vessel, to keep her in her true course, and, if possible, to bring her safely to a secure haven. Our object, as the people, can only be, that we should have good and impartial government for everybody. As the whole people, we can by no possibility have the smallest interest in any partial or unjust legislation; we do not wish to sacrifice any right of the richest or most powerful class, but we are resolved that that class shall not sacrifice the rights of a whole people." This quotation is but one among many which might have been chosen to illustrate his attitude. He stood for justice in all things, and his whole political life was a long struggle against the inequalities around him. Almost alone of English statesmen, he sided with the American Federals from the very first.

The Free Trade movement is interesting from several points of view. It was emphatically a struggle of classes. For generations the landowners had dominated English politics. We have sketched their

power and its sources during the eighteenth century. Step by step their monopoly had been threatened and undermined by an increase in trade and manufactures, by the mere growth of population. But, with the blindness that characterises an unjust cause, they thought that their rule would be continued for ever, and that a little strengthening to their power was the one thing needful. Thus they passed the celebrated Corn Law of 1815, which—not to refine overmuch—prohibited the importation of any foreign wheat. The landed interest was thus protected “with a wall of brass”; and, indeed, it was on no higher grounds than the necessity of protecting the landowners that arguments for the Corn Laws were based. The attitude of Protectionists was naïvely selfish; they put the good of their own class before that of the nation; they did their best to exasperate the feeling between rich and poor, to bring on a strife of classes—and they succeeded. The political situation of the present day is largely an antagonism of classes; there has arisen a mutual exasperation difficult of removal and profoundly dangerous to the future of the nation.

Another characteristic of the Free Trade movement was that it lay outside party lines. At first the Whigs—many of them great landowners—were as hostile to Free Trade as the Tories themselves. Lord Melbourne spoke solemnly of the “madness” of the movement, and there were many weaker-minded

Liberals who felt as he did. But the whole party—Liberals and Whigs alike—soon came round; they were convinced by the eloquence of Bright and the logic of Cobden. From the moment Sir Robert Peel, the Conservative leader, avowed his conversion, the speedy victory of the Free Traders was assured. Though the monopolists, led by Disraeli—who now leapt to the front—fought to the last gasp, the measure was carried through with a rush. Here, at any rate, reformers had no cause to complain of those half-measures, of that weak-kneed compromise which defaces nearly all the tardy acts of justice that are rendered to the workers.

England at once experienced an expansive influence without equal in her history. Her prosperity increased beyond all knowledge; the fetters were struck off, and the nation could move freely at last. It is frequently asserted that the workers have profited less by the reform than should be the case, and that the manufacturers used their power nearly as selfishly as the territorial oligarchy which they displaced. But when we look back fifty years we shall be forced to recognise the very great progress which all classes in the community have made, and the immense rise in the standard of comfort which has signalled the victory of the Manchester school.

The timely reform of 1846 saved England from the revolution of 1848. Abroad the Tory *régime* of the Holy Alliance at last proved intolerable, and

outraged Europe rose in arms. England escaped with nothing worse than a few riots. The forethought and wisdom of the Liberals had been justified. Many wrongs had been redressed, and England, unlike other countries, had no grievance that could blaze into revolution. But from one point of view it may be regarded as a pity that England was so little touched by the revolutionary fervour of that year. Our own security blinded us to the wrongs of Ireland. Had we been more embarrassed, we might have lent more willing attention to the complaints of that land. As it was, the Fenian agitation of that year produced few results. The methods of the agitators were doubtless indefensible. But the wrongs of Ireland were great enough to goad the most peaceful into revolt.

Every agrarian evil which flourished in England was exasperated tenfold on Irish soil. The stranger ruled, the stranger enjoyed, and the native starved. During the famine, the monopolists of England forbade the opening of the Irish ports to foreign grain. Men died in hundreds, and the survivors emigrated. The feelings of those that remained grew yet more bitter against the step-mother who had ruined their land. But there was a limit to the reforming impulses of the Liberals of those days; those impulses stopped short of Ireland, and the question of the Irish peasantry was left untouched till Mr. Gladstone addressed himself to the task.

In fact, the whole reforming impulse had for the moment worn itself out. Lord John Russell's career was past its meridian. Sir Robert Peel died in 1850. Mr. Gladstone had not yet shaken off his Toryism; and Lord Palmerston was, after 1854, the only possible leader. From 1846 to 1867 the nation moved forward but little. The causes are not far to seek—the middle class had settled down to enjoy its victory. Its ideals were vulgar, and its rule had a perceptibly materialist, Philistine tone. Twenty years of smug prosperity intervened between two great epochs of progress and reform. These years found in Lord Palmerston a fitting leader.

This statesman's career practically fills the home affairs of England from 1850 to 1865. His influence was immense down to the end of his career, and a sketch of his character must be attempted. He was, perhaps, the most unideal man who ever ruled the country, Pelham and North not excepted. His whole tone of mind was pitched low. With high-flown enthusiasms of any sort he had no patience. He had no love for reform at home, and during his years of power did practically nothing for internal questions. He was a bluff, off-hand man, whose essentially Philistine and Jingo mind was infinitely pleasing to the average middle-class Englishman. Probably the general moral tone of politics was rarely lower than during his administration.

But in his foreign policy Palmerston played a wholly

different *rôle*. Somewhere in his commonplace nature existed a genuine sympathy for oppressed peoples, and this sympathy he showed on many occasions. He lectured Foreign Governments on their iniquities, and explained to them that they could not hope to rule successfully till they had imitated the Parliamentary institutions of England. It cannot be said that he rendered very effective help to the insurgents of Hungary or Italy. But he winked at the assistance—men, money, *matériel*—which was given them ungrudgingly by private Englishmen. On the whole, it is certain that his attitude towards the revolutionaries of Europe did help on their cause. Side by side with this, however, was the amazing short-sightedness which induced Palmerston to approve Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 1851, and thus to commit England to an approval of one of the worst adventurers who ever reached a throne.

Palmerston's supremacy is not a particularly glorious page in our history. Reforming zeal during the years of his administration was at a very low ebb; but, as his career drew to a close there came a man who was destined to restore the apparently broken continuity, and carry out with fearless vigour the necessary changes demanded by the growth of Liberal feeling. Mr. Gladstone began life as a Tory, and remained with that party till middle age. He formed a strong attachment to Sir Robert Peel, and was converted with him to Free Trade. For some

years after Peel's death he was still to outward seeming a Conservative; but he had shown himself capable of moving with the times, and in 1851 had proved his sympathy with the oppressed by his denunciations of King "Bomba." He established his position by his attack on Disraeli's Budget of 1852, and by his own Budget of the year following. But the fall of Lord Aberdeen, owing to his mismanagement of the Crimean War, deprived Mr. Gladstone of office till 1859. Then, with the formation of Palmerston's last Ministry, he took up once again the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. The time of stagnation was nearly over. Mr. Gladstone was to begin the new era of change, and in so doing to announce himself a Liberal once for all. In 1864 a private member brought in a Reform motion—more, we may imagine, to ease his own conscience than from any hope of success. Mr. Gladstone suddenly threw down the gauntlet. It was for the upper, the privileged, classes to prove "the unworthiness, the incapacity, and the misconduct of the working classes." From this moment Mr. Gladstone had broken with Peelism, as before with Toryism; he was now a Liberal, the champion of Reform, of political justice.

Palmerston died just after the General Election of 1865. Earl Russell—better known as Lord John Russell—became Premier, with Mr. Gladstone as his Leader in the Commons. The Government Reform

Bill was beaten, thanks to the immortal "Cave of Adullam." But the delay mattered little. Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli brought in a Bill of their own, which, after a vast amount of queer antics and undignified concessions, became law in August, 1867. The second great stage had been reached: the working men had at last been admitted to political responsibility. Though this measure created infinitely less noise and disturbance than its more famous predecessor, it was a far greater revolution. The Bill of 1832 added less than half a million voters to the register; that of 1867 added some 1,300,000. When the General Election took place in the November of 1868, the Liberals swept the country; the new voters recognised who had given them their power, and returned them as their representatives in a majority of nearly 130. Earl Russell was grown old, Mr. Gladstone stood forward as unquestioned leader; he became Prime Minister, and held office till 1874.

He proved at once how complete was his faith in Liberalism by attacking and destroying one abuse after another. The Established Church of Ireland was the first object to which he turned. Its position was indefensible; its tenets had no hold on the Irish people. The usual outcry of spoliation was raised, but the principles of Mr. Gladstone's Bill were so obviously just that the opposition collapsed. This was the beginning of that long struggle for Irish rights

which only ended for him with his retirement from public life. Following this came the great Education Bill which established School Boards throughout the land. The Bill was absolutely necessary, for national education was at a lower ebb in England than in any other great European country. No country can exist where ignorance is the normal condition of its citizens. Since its introduction, the moral condition of the people has improved enormously, and in another generation "the illiterate" will have disappeared from among us. But as the politics of education are exhaustively dealt with elsewhere, it is unnecessary here to discuss the Compromise of 1870. One reform followed another. After a struggle with the Lords, University tests—the last remnant of religious bigotry—were removed. Purchase in the army—that stronghold of aristocracy—was abolished, Mr. Gladstone securing his end by a species of *coup d'état*. Finally, after a long struggle, the Ballot Act became law, and some of the worst forms of electoral intimidation were henceforth rendered impossible. From this moment the employé and the tenant could vote as he liked, with less fear of the employer or the squire depriving him of his means of livelihood.

The General Election of 1874 brings us to comparatively modern times. The struggle was fought upon both sides by men still in the fulness of political life. The questions at issue twenty years ago are still undecided. Events have come to pass whereby

the issues have been complicated, but the main outline of the struggle remains unaltered. The land, education, the privileged classes—these three items still lack settlement or finality.

It is important to grasp the meaning of the great Liberal defeat of 1874. Mr. Gladstone's Government of the previous five years had accomplished an enormous amount of work. Its labours can only be compared, as regards extent, with those of the first reformed Parliament. The privileges of the Irish Church were gone, University tests had disappeared, and the effort to create a national system of education had at last been brought to a successful issue. There arose the inevitable cry, "The country is going too fast!" Many people were frightened; many vested interests or abuses had been touched. The educational "compromise" had displeased the Dissenters, who, at the General Election of 1874, drew away from the Liberal party in large numbers. A section of the people "oriented" from their old creed, and turned the scale in favour of Mr. Disraeli and his party. The timid, the slothful, longed for an era of quiet and repose. They did not want any further legislation, and their votes threw the country into the hands of the Conservatives for six years.

It is hard to describe adequately the character of the Disraeli Ministry of 1874 to 1880 without using the abuse of the gutter. No Ministry ever received more noisy and boisterous praise while in power; no

Ministry, it would seem, was ever looked back to with such passionate regret by its supporters. Its chief was lauded to the skies ; its watchwords and catch-phrases can be met with on platforms at the present day. Yet it is safe to say that no Ministry of modern times has been more thoroughly bad or worked greater harm to the community. It left behind an evil trail of false glory and false ideals from which the nation suffers even now. The Ministry was essentially that of one man ; its leader alone was of importance. Lord Salisbury hardly rose to eminence till its last two years, and of respectable nonentities like Gathorne Hardy and Sir Richard Cross one need say nothing. To criticise the Ministry is to discuss Lord Beaconsfield. His rise to power and the great influence he obtained over his party have often been the subject of much comment and wonder. Nor is this wonder unreasonable. He was a Jew, and almost a foreigner ; at any rate, quite uninfluenced by the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen. His career had been chequered. He had once posed as a Radical. He had risen to notoriety by his virulent advocacy of the landed interest at the time of the Corn Law repeal. For that landed interest, its selfishness, its ignorance, its economic fallacies, he must have had in his heart the most profound contempt. But "he took the shot, and it hit." From the moment of his furious attack on Sir Robert Peel he stood forward as the one and

only man who could lead the Tory party in the future. He had to wait more than a quarter of a century for the consummation of his triumph ; but it came at last, in 1874. Then for the first time he led the Commons with a real majority behind him. His opportunity, for which he had waited with infinite patience, had come. What would he do with it ?

He had conceived that amazing idea known in the abstract as "Tory Democracy," in the concrete as "the Conservative working man." If this idea has any meaning beyond the temporary needs of an election cry, it is that the working men and their votes are to be used by the dominant classes for their own ends. They are to be deluded by promises of "social reform," better dwelling-houses, healthier conditions of life, and higher wages, thanks to the wise providence of a Tory Government. It is no new thing for the leaders of a privileged body to pose as the guardians of the classes below. It is a familiar device in politics—one that needs no explanation. But two criticisms may be laid down as universally applicable to such a cry—first, that it is flagrantly dishonest ; and, secondly, that the lower classes will not fail to repudiate the intrigue in time. Such a cry is, in fact, the last manoeuvre of a despairing oligarchy, driven to maintain its privileges by feigning to protect those whom it has oppressed. Let us see how the idea worked between 1874 and 1880.

The Statute Book is studded with Acts giving to the labourers the power of doing and acquiring various things. They are "allowed" to have better dwellings, "permitted" to work under more sanitary conditions, "encouraged" to acquire allotments.¹ The Conservative Government, in its paternal wisdom, graciously allowed the labourer certain permissive rights, which in any sound, healthy community ought to have been compulsorily secured. But the Ministry were very careful not to "do" or "establish" anything, for fear of taking something from the privileges of their class. Their statutes had little or no result. And the only marvel is, that the working classes, having been tricked so thoroughly and so recently by the Tories, should have trusted them again.

But Disraeli's home policy merits further notice. Among political reforms, one was certainly insistent—the Agricultural Franchise. A Bill for giving to the country labourers that power of voting which was vouchsafed to the boroughs in 1867 was introduced by Sir George Trevelyan in 1874, 1875, 1876, 1878, and 1879. In each case it was rejected by large majorities. And this simple fact shows the worth of "permissive" and "concessive" measures. Yet, during these years, the condition of the agricultural labourer was wretched in the extreme—

¹ A good instance of this kind of legislation is the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875. It allowed compensation for unexhausted improvements, "in cases where landlords and tenants have not objected to coming under the Act" !

1875 marks the appearance of Joseph Arch and the formation of agricultural trades unions. Matters were going ill with the rural population; but the landed interest is sacred, and its monopoly is not to be violated by reform. With the other items of Disraeli's home policy we need not deal. The opposition to Plimsoll was dictated by a different oligarchy—the trading and shipping interest; but the motive was the same. Nor does the monstrous Slave Circular of 1875 call for lengthy comment. It has long since passed into the dust-heap, but it is none the less one more striking proof of the Tory distrust of personal liberty—even in its most elementary form.

But the foreign policy of Disraeli is interesting—especially since we are suffering from it to this day.

He was, as we have said, an Oriental, and his views and ideals were vulgar through and through. He debauched the English mind with false ideals of Empire; he set up a painted and gaudy goddess whom he asked us to worship; he ended by linking England's future with that of the most rotten, cruel, and indefensible Government that Europe has ever seen.¹ To parallel the rule of Disraeli in modern times, we must look to Napoleon III. and his

¹ This is no figure of speech. Russia under Ivan the Terrible, the Low Countries under Alva, never experienced corruption, theft, intolerance, and massacre as a system of government. Wildly evil though Christian Governments have at times been, they have always condemned their excesses in anticipation by pointing to the extraordinary

nineteen years of rule in France. For both of these leaders were adventurers at bottom. Each strove to exploit his country. Each succeeded in corrupting it with false ideals. Each sought to perpetuate his power by leading the people away from the true line of national advance. France, in 1850, England in 1874, were equally in need of internal reform, of an extension of political responsibility. Both received instead the rule of a selfish adventurer, who desired to fill men's minds with wind, and to flatter all their more vulgar instincts. We may add, that had England not been an island, she would have met a similar punishment to that which befel France.

The facts of Beaconsfield's policy are well known. The Turkish Government was not worse than usual—only a little more *outré*. And the Servians and Bulgarians rose. They were suppressed, and with circumstances of horror which no one—save Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett¹—now disbelieves for one moment. No man in the habit of weighing evidence should have disbelieved them in 1876. But the Government chose to express “unqualified nescience” concerning the disturbance in the Balkans. By the treaty of 1856 it was bound to see that the Porte reformed its ways, and treated its subject populations well. England

and abnormal conditions of the moment. They never made of those excesses a regular rule, a guiding principle of administration.

¹ “The Hon. Member for the Yildiz division of Constantinople,” as Mr. Haldane has called him.

had never raised a finger to carry these articles into effect. Russia undertook to perform this vital office for her. After great difficulties and many mistakes, the Russians took Plevna, and captured the last Turkish army in the Shipka Pass. Constantinople lay open, and Skobelev was at its gates. England was therefore at the cross-roads. Either she might allow Skobelev to right the wrongs of centuries, or she might boldly oppose Russia's further advance. In the event she did neither. She tore up the San Stefano Treaty, and forced the compromise of Berlin, whereby she received Cyprus, and guaranteed the further existence of a despotism which has not renounced one jot of its savagery since it came under the patronage of Tory Cabinets and Cockney music-halls. The past two years are a sermon on the text of the Berlin Treaty, so striking and so awful that I will add no word. The year of the Treaty of Berlin saw the outbreak of a war prompted by the same motive. Beaconsfield attacked Afghanistan because he feared Russian influence in Central Asia. The Afghans were not particularly powerful, and the nation did not gain any great glory in triumphing over them. Yet this triumph was only won at great cost, and it illustrated to the full the false ideals which animated Beaconsfield's foreign policy. When he returned from Berlin, he announced to England that he brought "Peace with Honour." During the weeks when it lay in the balance whether

England would go to war with Russia or not, the clubs and music-halls rang with an unintelligent applause. Mysterious catch-words anent "Scientific Frontiers," "Peace and Empire," caught hold of a section of the nation. They were allowing the Government to adopt towards Russia the most fatal of all policies—"willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike." But they were so enchanted with the vulgar, "mysterious" attitude of Lord Beaconsfield and his followers, that they applauded to the echo his rarest work of national dishonour, the Treaty of Berlin. It needed all Mr. Gladstone's moral force and earnestness to bring the nation back to a sense of its duties. But a bad thing once done is not swept away all at once, and traces of Lord Beaconsfield's *flamboyant* policy can be seen to-day. The Jingoës who broke Mr. Gladstone's windows had no suspicion that their leader was "putting his money on the wrong horse," and they did not know that Lord Salisbury already felt the "misgivings" which it has taken him nineteen years to express.¹ "Lord Beaconsfield is dead" only when the idol of Primrose dames is reduced to disclaiming a policy which he cannot defend. In any case it is through Lord Beaconsfield that England stands committed to a false attitude as regards the Turkish Empire. We have spent much space over the Ministry of 1874

¹ *Vide* Lord Salisbury's speech on the Address in the Lords, January 20th, 1897.

because only by stripping off the false glamour wherewith Conservatives have surrounded it can we account for the overwhelming victory of the Liberal Party in 1880. The General Election declared emphatically that the nation was not to be led away by the hollow rhetoric and debasing ideals of Conservative foreign policy.

As the Liberal Ministry of 1880 has received the most unmeasured abuse, it may be as well to point out what it actually did achieve. It attempted resolutely to deal with the question of Irish land. Ireland had been so persistently put on one side by the Governments of the past that any measure of relief to the tenant was welcome, however imperfect its details. Mr. Gladstone's Bill of 1881 did effect something to stop the worst horrors of eviction, to prevent landlords from confiscating tenants' improvements, and to begin the system of Land Purchase which is now yielding such excellent results. The Act may not have been a complete remedy; yet it healed many evils, and gave some justice to the Irish peasant. That it met with violent opposition from the House of Lords was only what might have been expected. Something in the same direction was accomplished for England in the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1883. Unlike its predecessor of 1875, it gave the landlords no power to evade its provisions. But the greatest work of the 1880 Administration was the Reform Bill of 1884—the third of that name

and the most sweeping. It added some two million voters to the electorate, and was therefore, as far as numbers go, a greater change than the Act of 1832. It was opposed by the Tories both in the Lords and Commons. The reasons for this opposition were plausible; the underlying feeling was in any case clear. The Tories were jealous of this invasion of their stronghold; they grudged to the portion of the nation that was most backward this chance of raising itself and assuming the duties of citizenship.

That the Ministry of 1880 was guilty of very grievous mistakes may be at once conceded. Let me go boldly to the most grievous of them all. The story of General Gordon is an unfortunate page in our history. The Ministry failed to meet—perhaps to realise—the peril in which he was placed until too late. His death remains unquestionably a very grave blot on the record of that Government. The incident was used by Tory speakers as a proof that a Liberal Government cannot manage foreign affairs. Khartoum blotted out of men's minds the blunders of Lord Beaconsfield, the story of Isandula, Candahar, Mairwand, and Berlin. It remains, I firmly believe, a source of weakness to Liberalism even at this moment. But, even at its worst, it is not an indictment that should outweigh for one moment the great services done to the country by the Ministry of 1880.

After that Ministry had disappeared on a side issue—the Budget proposals of 1885—Ireland suddenly

became the one "burning question" of the day. Mr. Gladstone announced his acceptance of the principle of Home Rule. How far the Conservative leaders had played with the idea will hardly be known in our time. But they condemned Home Rule as one man, so soon as Mr. Gladstone and his followers took it up. Subsequent events are too well known to need repetition. Many of his followers split off from him—the waverers were pulled this way and that under conflicting influence. And, indeed, it needed a man of independence and courage to accept an idea which, though so old in principle, was so new in application. We can hardly wonder that some of the weaker-hearted were in much perplexity as to what they should do. Briefly, the Home Rule Bill was beaten in the Commons, and the "Unionist" Coalition—to give it its accepted name—swept the country at the polls. Once again the nation settled down to six years of Conservative rule. This is hardly the time to view the movement for Home Rule in a calm light. It is not past history—it is a story of which we have not yet heard the end; its conclusion is inevitable, however long it may be in coming. Two or three points may, however, be indicated.

It has been a common sneer with the Tories that Mr. Gladstone only accepted Home Rule when the General Election of 1885 had returned parties so evenly balanced that the Nationalists held the key

to the situation. Such a sneer may be put aside as trivial and impertinent. The General Election of 1886 was the first that had taken place under the widened franchise. And the Irish votes, now cast for the first time, declared emphatically for Home Rule and the Nationalist party.¹ The Irish nation had spoken; about the unanimity of its utterance there could now be no doubt. Mr. Gladstone and the Liberals were convinced.

Of those who left Liberalism at that time, many were certain to go sooner or later. They were the weaker brethren, who felt their interests threatened, who lacked faith in the future and in the people, and they have found a haven of rest. Secondly, that Liberals of all classes accepted the light as soon as a man arose to show it forth implied a self-abnegation and a love of abstract justice that recalls the early days of Liberalism. They had been taught to distrust and fear the Home Rule movement; they had condemned its tactics and its champions. Yet when the issue was put plainly to them, they took the true path, caring only to right the wrongs of Ireland so far as in them lay. That it was a sacrifice is only the superficial view.² But, from that moment,

¹ Lord Randolph Churchill had prophesied that the widened franchise in Ireland would mean a serious diminution of the Nationalist strength.

² "I do not understand the word 'sacrifices' applied to a movement which has for its end something which those who took part in that movement believe to be of sovereign good both for Ireland and for this island."—Rt. Hon. John Morley, M.P., at Oxford, Feb. 20, 1897.

in the eyes of the genteel, the correct section of society, Liberalism became more than ever a dangerous and discreditable creed.

Lastly, due homage must be rendered to the Nationalist party. They have been called adventurers, publicans and sinners. Every kind of insinuation, of sneer, of abuse has been their portion. Yet whenever we get a little below the surface and discover how they lived—their sacrifices, their constancy, the hardships they endured—we shall applaud their devotion and reverence their patriotism. Their struggle against English insolence and injustice is a creditable page in Parliamentary history. But the credit goes to the Celtic fringe.

During the next six years Ireland continued to occupy the front place. Coercion Bills were passed, and many parts of the land were treated like a besieged town. Indeed, for a time, there was almost civil war. That comparative peace reigns once again in Ireland may possibly be due not so much to the Crimes Acts as to the series of Land Bills enacted at intervals during these years. Credit be where it is due: the Land Act of 1887 did much to help the Irish peasant. His rent was made less crushing, and he could purchase his land on easier terms. For the rest, those years show a chequered record. Men still dispute as to the precise meaning of the Parnell Commission; and the effects of the Nationalist split are still painfully evident. Whether Home Rule

may be accomplished shortly or not is a question that may be left to the political prophet ; but, at any rate, the Irish Question is very far from the state of deadness which the Tories desire for it.

If we are to look at the Ministry of 1886 from the point of view of 1897, we shall have to confess that the country was in face of a question yet more absorbing than Ireland. The condition of the working classes is at all times more insecure than that of the capitalists ; they are never altogether free from anxiety or want. A depression in trade, which means to the capitalist the sacrifice of a yacht or a country house, may mean literal starvation to the workers. But, at any rate, from 1886 onwards, the Labour Question forced itself to the front, and it is now the great question of the day. We can summarise the mental change by saying that we now hear the word "social" where "political" used to be the common epithet. It is to the relations of classes and to the distribution of wealth that men now turn their eyes. Purely political questions appear to have fallen into the background ; the change is already seen in the attitude of thinkers and publicists. In fact, the older political economy, in the eyes of many, has become discredited. A large instalment of free trade has only doubled wages and incomes. It has not brought England to the millennium which some foolish enthusiasts had looked for.

The capitalist—it is asserted by the illiberal and

the ignorant—has reaped all the benefits of the increase in national wealth. The workman has been used and thrown on one side. The unemployed are numerous, and their numbers are used as an argument to prove that the working man is little better off than he was before 1846. The distribution of wealth, we are told, is most unequal, and thus the very school which took the first step in redressing the balance is now accused of having introduced the inequality. Property, it is argued, has far more duties than rights. If necessary, property must be confiscated by the State, and held as a national trust. This is the theory urged by all Collectivist writers. The data upon which the attack on the Manchester school is based are examined elsewhere in this book, and are found to be distorted or non-existent. The ideas are not new ; they found many upholders in the early part of the century. But the needs of the time give them a new meaning. During the last ten years Socialism has been in all men's mouths.

On the practical side, this Labour Question—for so we must call it—absorbed more and more attention. There were riots of the unemployed in February, 1886, and in November, 1887. The trades unions were growing in strength, till nearly every trade had its union, to which most of its workers adhered. Then came the Dock Strike of 1889. This was an event of infinite importance, and the impression it left on the minds of men was deep

and lasting. For weeks the greatest port in the world was idle: London was filled with workers on strike. To any unprejudiced man, it was at once clear that on the main issue the strikers were right. They had been working in a most precarious wise, for a miserable wage. They had been oppressed by the Dock Companies; if they were not to be ground into serfdom, it was necessary that they should resist resolutely. The struggle was long and bitter. The companies held on to their unjust position with the morbid tenacity which always assists a rotten and oppressive privilege. How they were beaten, and how Cardinal Manning came forward to heal the quarrel, everybody knows. But from that moment the working classes and the distribution of wealth claimed the first place in men's notice. The cry grew steadily, "We have had enough of Ireland; for Heaven's sake, let us look nearer home." Thus Ireland lost its position of absorbing importance: it became a secondary matter; social questions, and above all the Labour Problem, took its place. On this latter the fate of the Liberal party will inevitably turn.

But before dealing with the present situation we must just touch on the main events of the past few years. The Conservative Government of 1886 had no lack of energy. It fulfilled an essentially Liberal pledge by increasing the scope of local self-government. It created County Councils. Of

their work it would be premature to speak. London alone may be mentioned. In spite of mistakes—whereof the Tories have been swift to take account—the condition of the capital has been improved very greatly. Its state under the old Vestry system was a disgrace to the empire. London was the worst-governed capital in Europe. It is now in a fair way to be the best. Though much hampered by the moribund vestries and by the Corporation, the County Council is doing great things for London. It has worked on broad lines, and it has nearly always possessed an active and progressive majority. It has become a parliament in miniature, of an importance that grows daily. But by far its best work has been to inspire among Londoners a civic feeling of which they had previously been totally devoid.

In granting free education (1891) the Conservatives completed one of the measures that has been the particular property of Liberalism. It is difficult to convince some of our opponents, even to this day, that money spent on education is not a mistake. They have declaimed loudly against the lavish expenditure of Board schools, and have declared that a small modicum of education—say “the three R’s”—is enough for the children of working men. Now, it shows a singular blindness not to recognise that our national education has been most inferior in the past to that of foreign countries, and that England has suffered in consequence. But this point

is developed elsewhere : what we would wish to make absolutely clear is this—of all the needs and cries of the present day, none has a more purely abstract end than education. Its practical results are out of sight, or only to be seen when we compare the commerce and wealth of relatively educated and uneducated nations. You cannot *see* the effect of education as you see the effect of a new invention. Its value is a matter of faith. That is to say, those who believe in education, who are eager for its success and firm for its continued improvement, are animated by that belief in ideals which characterises the real Liberal. This state of mind involves a struggle, as we have seen. But we shall not be far from the mark if we make a fervour for education the canon of true Liberalism.

In 1892—the year after the passing of the Education Bill—came a dissolution, and the country returned Mr. Gladstone to power with a majority of forty—a superiority small, but sufficient. The Party was pledged to the hilt to bring in Home Rule, and accordingly the Session of 1893 saw a Home Rule Bill once again before the Commons. After long delays, it reached the Upper House, and was rejected by an enormous majority. An urgent whip had been sent round. Juvenile peers, whose laborious boyhood had been passed in anything but the study of great political problems, came from long distances to vote against a Bill they

had not read. The labours of a whole session were thrown away. It must be a delicate matter for outsiders to pronounce definitely as to what the Ministry should have done at this moment. But, surely, a dissolution would have been the best as well as the boldest course. The Ministry had then a real cry with which to go to the country. It had loyally fulfilled its pledges. The House of Lords stood in the way—the country should settle the question between them. Never again did the Liberal Government possess a programme so clear and explicit. Never again were they able to ask from the country a verdict on facts so easy of comprehension. They might have been beaten, but it would have been an honourable defeat giving earnest of future victory. It would not have been the disaster of 1895. But the Ministry refused to face the responsibility of another General Election within fifteen months. The position must have been one of great difficulty. Doubtless the rank and file of the Liberal members were strongly against a dissolution. Yet it would have been the more honest course to pursue. As it was, the Ministry dragged on a humiliating if not ineffectual existence, and was dismissed by a chance vote on a side-issue.

Its latter days were passed in struggling with great difficulties. The man who had led Liberalism for nearly thirty years retired from active life into the strenuous case which is his idleness. Mr. Glad-

stone at last determined to live for the future in the intimacy of his great equals of the past. Politics knew him no more. This loss to Liberalism it is impossible adequately to measure. Nor can we at this moment attempt any final judgment on what he has done for Liberalism. Only we can say, that of all the great statesmen of England there is not one who has accomplished as much as he in destroying unjust privileges, in establishing for the people their just rights. Can we say more? Is it possible for a ruler of men to leave behind him a nobler or greater record than this? Perhaps it is only now that the leader is gone that we can see how commanding a place he held in the life of the nation, and how great a loss the cause of progress has suffered from his retirement. At any rate, the absence of Mr. Gladstone was one of the reasons of the defeat of 1895. The other causes must be reviewed at some length. Their analysis, if correctly made, should contain the future fortunes of Liberalism.

It will be readily admitted that the fall of the Liberal party in 1895 was an almost unprecedented fact in our political history. We can scarcely call to mind any defeat at the polls so overwhelming. If Liberalism is to regain the hold which it had on the country in 1880, it can only be by constant struggle and effort, and by pondering most carefully over the causes of the recent disaster.

One cause of the Liberal defeat is that a large

section of the working classes had lost confidence in the future and gratitude to the past of the Liberal party. Their leaders, from whom they have taken their political complexion, no longer believe Liberals sincere in advocating the rights of labour. "Liberalism," they say, "is controlled by a gang of capitalists. The rank and file may be sincere, but the Whig section still controls the councils. With all their professions of democratic sentiment, Liberals do not intend to do anything for the working classes. Some other body must be formed which can and will work for them. Liberals have played with Collectivism; we will push it forward in real earnest."

The latter portion of this indictment is true, and forms a second and important element in the defeat. Some Liberals *have* played with Collectivism; they have encouraged it, and have given half promises to work in its direction; they have expressed a disbelief in the institution of property. One or two prominent members of the party are Collectivists through and through; at any rate, they join Tory democrats in applauding every proposal which tends towards that end. Certain sound Liberals of mediocre capacity, as well as many Collectivist agitators, have completely broken with the party. The latter are often worthy zealots, impatient of injustice, and keenly eager for the material well-being of the workers. They cannot understand why Liberals will not swallow the

whole doctrine and write "Socialism" on their banners. From their own point of view nothing could be more natural. What aspect does the Liberal party present to *them*? It is a mass of cliques without a rallying word in common. It has no leader; it is not homogeneous. No man can tell what was the policy of the party at the last General Election. One man cried for Local Option, and another wished to end the Lords. A few put Home Rule first. No one agreed with his neighbour. To all these discordant demands the workers displayed a profound indifference. They had not been taught the full meaning of these measures, and the little information they possessed too often came through the misleading channel of Tory oratory. Perhaps it was the penalty the party was paying for not having dissolved on the Irish Question in 1893. In any case, the *morale* of the party was gone. Against this divided mass were arrayed both the solid hosts of Tory prejudice and the fiery, and often unscrupulous, opposition of the Independent Labour Party. The Liberals went down. They would not speak out; their attitude seemed mean and timid. The Collectivists declared that they had no reason for existence.

Here, then, is the explanation of the discredit which has fallen upon us. But where is the remedy?

The remedy is simply this. Liberalism must once again base its claims on broad, abstract, moral lines. Its measures aim to fulfil great moral ideas, not merely

to confer small material gains. In the days of Bright and Cobden, Liberalism appealed to great abstract conceptions. It was fighting for rights which should belong to every man. Its aim was to make each man a worthier citizen by giving him the capacity for citizenship. If there was privilege, the Liberals attacked it; if there was injustice, they strove to abolish it. They fought for material good to the workers, but their struggle was based on higher considerations than shillings and pence. The Anti-Corn Law agitation was no materialist crusade; it was animated by higher motives. Their philosophy was human equality; their battle cry, freedom. Though they would have rejected the title, they were certainly the heirs of the French Revolution, doing for their country what the Convention had done for France. And, like the Revolutionaries, they were amazingly successful because their principles were simple and lofty and their aims were above merely material concerns. No creed can conquer which does not appeal to higher motives than the desire for comfort. And the Liberals of the past won a great victory, fighting against great odds.

But of late years an entire change has come over the tone of our thought. The philosopher notes a reaction from the Liberalism of '48. He sees that the force of these ideas has waned, or at best lies dormant. The wave of reaction has run strong. It has flooded the platform and the polling booth.

Everywhere we find men addressing themselves to the political problem in a totally different way from that of the past. Yet behind these superficial appearances there remains, throughout the country, true Liberal feeling in strong and even overwhelming force. The first question the reformer of to-day asks is, "How will this affect our pockets? How will the worker and the unprivileged be benefited pecuniarily by such-and-such a change?" To speak to such a man of liberty, of justice, is to talk to closed ears. He stands on different ground, and events reach him through a different medium. He is purely concerned with the material aspects of the case. Thus we find that each problem as it arises is dealt with on thoroughly unideal lines. Take the question of Land Nationalisation. The argument in favour of this thesis will be as follows: "The land originally belonged to the whole people"—a proposition, by the way, which will not stand a moment's examination, but let it pass; "it has been appropriated by a dominant class few in numbers. It must be again put into the hands of the community, that everyone may profit by it alike, that the rent may go to the payment of national burdens. Thus the cultivator will be paying rent not to one individual, a member of a class pre-eminent in selfishness, but to the whole people, partly therefore to himself. Ergo, he will certainly benefit, and his struggle for a living will be easier." This is no unfair statement of the

case for Land Nationalisation as presented by the Collectivist.

Now, how ought this matter to be approached? Obviously the first question to be asked is not "Will the national comfort be increased?" but—"How will it affect the liberty of the individual?" Land Nationalisation would, we hold, set up a despotism as searching and far more destructive of thrift than even that of the squirearchy at its worst. And if such a despotism would result, then Land Nationalisation must be avoided as we would avoid poison. But an argument based on national character seems valueless to most political thinkers of the present day. It is not theirs to discuss abstract propositions concerning liberty and the like. Provided their schemes have a plausible air of affording greater ease and comfort to a numerical majority, they are oblivious of any higher question. They, at least, will do their little best towards making the "City of Pigs" a reality at last.¹

I have taken but one specimen to show this attitude of mind. Instances could be multiplied. But as I do not wish to trench on subjects which are dealt with elsewhere, I shall return to the historical application. The Liberal party has been beaten because it has attempted to meet the Collectivist on his own ground—because it has tried to compete with him in materialist programmes and promises

¹ Plato : "Republic," Book ii.

of increased comfort. It must return to its earlier, better ideal. It must take its stand on the moral grounds of liberty and justice. It must teach the individual his duties as a citizen, and material prosperity will follow. Stimulate his intelligence, his thrift, his patriotism, and he will take good care to improve his surroundings. To that end the machinery of local self-government has been provided.

It is shown elsewhere what are the economic conditions which we would wish to bring about. I need not speak here of the moral benefits of small holdings and profit-sharing. All I am concerned to point out is that with Socialism there can be no capitulation, no compromise. We must not coquet with it in the future as we have done in the past. We can see that it holds out a false ideal—an ideal which would lead to despotism, if not to national bankruptcy. Its watchwords, its philosophy, run counter to all the great ideas of the past. It is debauching the workers with low ambitions; it is depriving them of belief in themselves. As we believe it to be leading men in wrong paths and towards an end profoundly false, we will combat it as resolutely as we did the Tory oligarchy with *its* Socialism in the past.¹

But the mistakes of less than a decade ought not to be allowed to weigh against a century's successful battle for the downtrodden and the oppressed. Liberal ideas have carried the workers out of the

¹ *v.* pp. 235, 236.

frightful misery and ignorance which was their lot under the Toryism of seventy years ago ; they will be their mainstay in the future. The work is but half done. The House of Lords clamours for the knife of reform ; the hereditary principle everywhere cankers the social life of England. The franchise is still restricted, and so manipulated that every obstacle is put in the way of the labourer obtaining the vote which is his. The Land Laws are more than mediæval in their complexity, and they bear the impress of the privileged class which made them. In the registration of land, as of voters, legal expenses are preposterous. There is Home Rule, which must be given, and the wrongs of centuries to Ireland which are only half alleviated. There are a thousand remnants of injustice which Liberalism must grapple with and overthrow. There are intellects as clear and as virile as of old, ready for the struggle. But our leaders keep silence, and believers in Liberalism remain perplexed. Until someone speaks out and impeaches the evils which are patent to all men, the Liberal party must remain a vacillating and incongruous body. Time presses, and time is of priceless value. The opportunity may easily be lost. Until one of our leaders has the courage to fling away the scabbard and commence the attack, the rank and file must be confined to semi-idleness. We have been without a leader long enough, and we ask for a man with a clear head and unshaken faith to give the word.

We have dealt at much length with the historical basis upon which Liberalism rests, the needs which created it, its record in the past, its blunders in the present, its hopes for the future. We can see how it has raised the people, given them power and understanding; how it swept away abuses and increased national wealth and national prosperity. But its principles are not of one time or age. It has taken a certain very distinct colour from the special circumstances of England in the nineteenth century. Yet the root idea is eternal. Wherever there is inequality, wherever there is unjust privilege, wherever men are chattels rather than citizens, there will be Liberalism and Liberals fighting to redress the balance. To hold its creed demands constant effort, constant struggle. But the creed is well worth the fight, for its name is Liberty.

PHILIP JAMES MACDONELL.

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